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ABSTRACT

The Urban Academy (UA), an ungraded New York city alternative public high school, is a school where structures for caring have been constructed to ensure that the young people who attend are surrounded by strong relationships that support their living and their learning. Over 90 percent of the school's students graduate, and over 95 percent of these go on to postsecondary education. UA students are ethnically, culturally, socioeconomically, and intellectually diverse. The school responds to their basic needs and provides caring in part through its small size and carefully adapted space. Structures and processes of the school promote self-esteem. A policy of undifferentiated staffing asks teachers to take on diverse roles that increase the opportunities and contexts in which students have access to them and in which they can be responsive to student needs. Details of school structure, schedules, and assessment practices are described. Five appendixes include a graduating student survey, a course catalogue, a sample weekly schedule, and a speaker's evaluation form. (Contains 19 references.) (SLD)

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An Inquiry High School:

Learner-Centered Accountability at the Urban Academy

Jacqueline Ancess

Foreword by Linda Darling-Hammond

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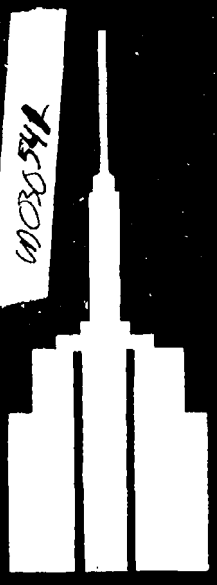

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March 1995

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Foreword

Linda Darling-Hammond

In our nation's central cities, and in other challenged communities where needs outstrip resources and despair often overwhelms hope, children and young people increasingly fall through the cracks. They fall through the cracks of families that are economically and psychologically stressed, of social welfare systems that are dysfunctional and overly bureaucratized, and of huge, factory-model schools that are structured to process masses of anonymous students without reference to who they are or what they need. Many struggle with the deaths and traumas of their friends and relatives, with the grinding toll of poverty, and with a daily schooling experience that conveys a basic lack of respect for their concerns or their aspirations. Particularly in places like New York City, where the warehouse high school was invented, they can receive little continuous adult support from teachers who see 150 students or more each day and from counselors with caseloads of several hundred.

Trying to grow up with too little guidance and support, many of these young people gradually or precipitously lose a sense of who they are and what they might become. They start to dissociate from the institutions that have failed to connect to them in a meaningful way. They are overwhelmed with problems they are too young to handle, and they give up on the dream of a purposeful, productive future. In short, they fall through the cracks.

The Urban Academy is a school where there are no cracks for students to fall into -- where structures for caring have been constructed to ensure that young people are surrounded by a web of strong relationships that support both their living and their learning. Founded and co-directed by visionary educators Ann Cook and Herb Mack to serve students who have been failed by other schools, the Academy provides a nurturing community that explicitly and consciously supports its students in all areas of their lives. Moreover, it challenges them intellectually to inquire deeply and, ultimately, to excel. Over 90 percent of the young people who find their way to the Academy -- after having dropped out of or left other schools -- graduate, and over 95 percent of these graduates go on to postsecondary education. They reclaim their futures in the course of finding themselves.

Although schools cannot offset all of the failings of society or the stresses of contemporary life, schools that create supportive and nurturing communities can make a tremendous difference in the lives of the students they serve. The Urban Academy's story provides a vivid account of the important features of such powerful school settings. Its experience illustrates the consistent findings of recent research showing that smaller schools that are organized to provide continuous relationships among adults and young people and

that focus on meaningful and challenging kinds of learning, are more successful at motivating, engaging, and graduating students, and ensuring their later success.

Now more than ever, as children grow up in families and communities that are stressed and can offer fewer supports, they need schools that themselves are caring communities -- that provide teachers with the means to know students well as the building blocks for academic growth and achievement. Such schools, like the Urban Academy, produce greater levels of both attachment and achievement than large, impersonal schools that "have fostered organizational environments marked by distrust, social conflict, and lack of personal regard for the individuals who teach and learn in these institutions" (Lee, Bryk, and Smith, 1993, p. 227).

Reformers across the country are working to reinvent high schools -- to replace traditional bureaucratic structures with communitarian models that can provide the human and organizational conditions for trust and community. The Urban Academy, with partner schools that have founded the Center for Collaborative Education in New York City, is helping to mentor other such schools into existence. The National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST) is helping to describe how these schools are able to develop caring communities that ensure student success. We hope that this work supports others in their efforts to reinvent schooling so someday, in all communities, it works for all kids.

Chapter 1
Introduction

Many years ago at Lincoln Center's New York State Theater, I watched Melissa Hayden and Allegra Kent dance a duet in George Balanchine's ballet, ***Agon***. Suddenly, Kent's foot touched Hayden's leg and sparks flew. The symmetry was dismantled, the line fragmented, the balance lost, the movement short-circuited. With the tension unharnessed and discharged, the illusion of effortlessness and easily achieved beauty, harmony, and perfection collapsed. The seams of what had always seemed seamless were revealed. There was now no disputing that this was hard stuff that I and most other mere mortals could never do, never achieve before the mirrors of our bedrooms let alone on the world's stages, certainly not without years of study, practice, sacrifice, and devotion, not to mention talent. Clearly, there was more to ballet than met the eye.

I am reminded of this wonderful and terrible moment in my youth when I visit the Urban Academy (UA) because the flow, the balance, the energy, the synergy, the hum, the buzz, the humor, and the wholeness -- that dazzling counterpoint of music and dance -- deceive me into believing that making a good school, an effective school, a working school, is really quite simple. All you need to do is care and be intelligent, and the making of good schools becomes ridiculously simple and obvious! But Urban, like ***Agon***, is not simple, not effortless, not a bag of tricks; it is carefully orchestrated and choreographed artistry with all the crafting, skill, structure, detail, thought, practice, struggle, knowledge, commitment, talent, love, passion, and time that artistry demands and that make artistry look easy.

Although the misfiring of a dance performance reveals its normally invisible inner workings and provides glimpses of the how the parts constitute the whole, there are many other ways to learn how a dance comes to be, such as visits to rehearsals, reviews of the choreographic notes, and interviews. One needs a process of inquiry that can tease out the parts of the whole without causing its disintegration or without giving the impression that the parts have meaning or power in isolation. The same can be said of a school. When something does not work, we see in a flash how things fall apart. When it does work, we need to tease out the parts that form the whole that we call an effective school, always mindful that we are suspending reality of how a whole school works in order to get a close--up glimpse. This kind of analytic process enables us to learn both what the pieces are and how they work together.

This dynamic of analysis -- of teasing out the parts to see how they work and then putting them back together again -- has been the guiding perspective of the research on UA. It has illuminated a learner-centered accountability process in action that zooms in on the interaction between infrastructure and individuals, detailing how this interactive interdependency works to create an effective school. Three interlocking perspectives frame this study:

1. supports and safeguards to keep students from falling through the cracks
2. structures for responsive and responsible practice
3. mechanisms for assessing students and school performance in order to determine student growth and progress[1]

The data were collected over a period of six months and are drawn from observations of classrooms, formal meetings, informal encounters, and school rituals; interviews with students, staff, and parents; and the examination and analysis of school documents, including notes from staff meetings, curriculum units, schedules, and so forth, in the school's document book. The names of students have been changed and are indicated with an asterisk following the first use of the pseudonym. Teachers' names remain unchanged.

The Context

The Urban Academy is an ungraded New York City public alternative high school enrolling 100 students whose ages range from 14 to 19 and who are ethnically, culturally, socioeconomically, and intellectually diverse. Although UA is located within a large comprehensive high school in a recently gentrified but socioeconomically diverse Manhattan neighborhood, it has a predominantly minority, working-class, poor student body that lives elsewhere, throughout the city. A large number of UA students have had at least one unsuccessful experience in a traditional high school. Several have histories of cutting; others have dropped out. Some have functional, supportive families; others' family circumstances are dysfunctional or tragic. A few have well-developed academic skills. Most are poorly prepared for high school work. But when they enter the Urban Academy, they begin anew: "They become members of an academic community seeking understanding in the same way inquiring minds have done over the centuries. They ask questions and examine the variety of ways they can be answered" (Urban Academy, 1991b). Their inquiry is framed by authentic questions: questions that require research, that broaden the questioner, and that can, given thoughtful and reflective examination based on evidence, have several and even conflicting answers. Recent questions students have been asked to explore range from "What are the origins of life?" to "What is a community?" to "What is a good museum?"

Herb Mack and Ann Cook, the founders and codirectors of the Urban Academy, conceive of the school as a community in which adults create an educational context that provides students with opportunities to learn and develop. The educational context is characterized and defined by a shared and unequivocal commitment to collaboration and inquiry learning: "The staff and students work together to build the students' facility to explore ideas; conduct research; evaluate information; discuss ideas respectfully; develop new sources of fact and opinion; and present and defend their findings" (Urban Academy,

[1]The model of a learner-centered accountability system and the three interlocking perspectives framing this study were formulated by Linda Darling-Hammond.

1991b). These principles are embedded in the daily life of the school community: They form the core of the instructional program; they are the basis for evaluating student progress and achievement; they are the criteria on which the staff assess the school's success; and they constitute the barometer signaling the directions for ongoing school development and improvement. It is the successful enactment of school as an intellectual community that students, parents, and faculty assert is responsible for the successful student outcomes: Over 90 percent graduate and 95 percent of the graduates continue on to postsecondary education.

School, UA students remark, must be personal before it can be educational. So it is not surprising that an iteration between caring and serious intellectual challenge characterizes the culture of the Urban Academy school community. UA aims to enable students to develop intellectual confidence for both the individual and the common good. Not only ought UA students be able to have meaningful choices for their personal future, but they ought to be able to "become good citizens who value civil debate," who value and respect democracy, and who can and will engage in making informed choices for our nation (Urban Academy, 1991b). UA enacts its commitment to education for a democratic society by creating pathways to excellence for all members of its diverse student body: UA staff members set the same educational goals and provide the same enriched education for all students; they also expect high performance and success from everyone. These efforts mark UA as an institution committed to breaking through the caste system that characterizes American public and private education, which prepares only an elite to be the nation's decision makers. Indeed, UA would argue that one cannot be a good citizen in a democracy if one does not have choices or make choices and if one does not have the strategies with which to make informed choices. UA would argue that one of the most powerful safeguards of democracy is an education that prepares all of a society's young for responsible citizenship.

Chapter 2
Supports and Safeguards for Students

In a school overwhelmingly populated by students who have fallen through the cracks elsewhere, what supports and safeguards does Urban Academy have in place to protect students from a repeat experience? When Urban Academy students are asked how the school keeps young people from falling through the cracks, they invariably respond that Urban has "eliminated the cracks." "Everyone here cares," exclaims a group of students eating lunch in the common room adjacent to the school office. When that comment is followed by a teacher's popping in to tell the students that she will be having her lunch in the computer room if anyone needs any help, there is a chorus of shouts: "See what I mean!"

Although the most compelling need expressed by students is their need to be cared for, what does caring mean? And what does caring mean in an educational context? What opportunities are provided at the Urban Academy for caring to be enacted? How is UA organized so that caring can be enacted? The answers to these questions illuminate how UA eliminates the cracks by advancing the cause of the students so that they catapult themselves into a different life trajectory. UA becomes the advocate and the guardian for the future of its students.

What Caring Means

As Urban Academy students tell it, caring "is the main thing." What do the students mean by caring? They explain:

- There is always a teacher [every adult, regardless of his or her position, is seen as a teacher] to help you with your problems whether they are academic or personal.

- They're totally there for you.

- They keep me in school.

- When a student begins to fall through the cracks, an alarm goes off -- the teachers alert the student.

- The foundation here is so strong. There is a community. It's secure.

- They eliminate the problems that lead to the cracks. They do what they have to do to keep kids in school. If I need to get up early, they'll call me.

- They know that you need certain circumstances to get an education and they do

their best to create those circumstances. Urban doesn't only respond to your educational needs -- but all your needs.

- Teachers take the time on your work.

- Teachers want you to work to the best of your ability. In most schools, teachers just want you to do your work, not necessarily for you to be your best.

- They teach us that everything is totally connected and they practice what they preach.

- There's more personalized attention here -- teachers know you and you know them.

- There's no room to fall through the cracks. If you're not here you're missed. Your home is called.

- It's a little support system.

- A lot of it is the size.

- Teachers are also counselors. I know if I need someone, there will be someone there for me.

- Teachers are always available.

The students' comments reveal that UA responds to their most compelling needs as human beings, as adolescents, and particularly as adolescents who are especially vulnerable because of prior school failure or overwhelming life circumstances. Like most people, they want very much to be known -- they need not to be anonymous or faceless or invisible or alone. Like most adolescents, they are still struggling with autonomy and dependence, freedom and responsibility. Like most adolescents, especially those who have experienced alienation and failure in school, they are still unsure of their capacity to commit to themselves, to rescue themselves if they start to slide, to believe that the capacity to be successful students resides within themselves. This is demonstrated by the number of students who credit Urban Academy rather than themselves for their continuance in school.

What students mean when they say that all of the adults at UA care is that the school meets their dependency needs in the vastly diverse and complex ways their needs are manifested. Students feel confident that although other adults in their lives may have disappointed them, they can count unconditionally on some adult member of the UA community to be there for them and protect them so that they are not and do not feel vulnerable and abandoned. The willingness of teachers and other adults to assume the role required to meet these needs is pivotal. How does UA obtain from teachers what is tantamount to a parental commitment? Then, how does UA structure the role of teachers so

that they can make this commitment? Although UA begins by carefully hiring teachers who have a heartfelt commitment to supporting and educating their particular student population, good intentions alone will not carry the day. One must look to both the conception and the organization of UA to learn how caring and commitment are enacted to have the maximum impact on students.

Organizing School to be a Caring Community

Codirector Mack explains how the conception of UA as a people-centered educational community encourages decision making that demonstrates caring: "People are the most important thing. . . . Who we are and who we want to be drives the school. . . . Individual needs, not institutional needs, drive the school. . . . Decisions are made around constellations of people issues rather than external requirements."[2] For example, when a student who is homeless arrives at school still distraught and despondent about the previous night's events, UA faculty will cover the class of the student's advisor, freeing him or her to comfort and stabilize the youngster so that he or she can refocus on learning. UA's willingness and capacity to resolve tensions between the needs of the school and the needs of individuals in favor of the individual increase the likelihood that vulnerable students will survive and flourish. UA understands that the school must be willing to change what Sarason refers to as its "existing regularities" (1982, chap. 6) if education is to be accessible to vulnerable students whose lives do not conform to the needs of school.. UA understands that the school must have the freedom, volition, and capacity to shape its schedule to the needs of the students, that is, to create new regularities (Sarason, 1982, chap. 6). Because UA sees itself as people-centered, because it is small, and because it believes in organizing for success, it can manipulate the schedule to serve the students without seeing this as an irregularity, as a disruptive force, or as an indulgence. Both its vision of itself and its small size provide UA with the flexibility necessary to be effective.

The dilemma a school confronts when it attempts to organize itself for caring is how not to lose sight of its primary mission, which is education. In fact, as UA teacher Nancy Jachim observes, the challenge a school faces is negotiating the tensions of the competing twin agendas of caring and academic rigor so that they serve each other. Only when these competing priorities are in dynamic tension with each other, in an iterative relationship, can schools challenge their students' full potential and achieve their mission as institutions of education. By creating opportunities for caring through the development of structures and processes to promote self-efficacy and self-esteem, by redefining teacher roles and teaching work, and by designing an innovative instructional program characterized by flexible scheduling, the Urban Academy demonstrates how caring and academic rigor can coexist. UA believes that caring can be, indeed must be, conjointly embedded in both interpersonal relationships and the instructional program.

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[2]Quotations not identified by specific documents or publications have been taken verbatim from interviews with Urban Academy community members.

Creating Opportunities for Caring

School Size. Size is a key factor that provides opportunities for or mitigates against maximum caring. UA chooses to be a small school so that it can create a personal, intimate environment in which all of the students can know one another and all of the staff. This "knowability" reinforces the value and sense of community and constructs a resilient safety net of relationships. Jachim remarks that "every kid is grabbed by some adult." No one is unconnected. The structure and size, Mack points out, enable students to make their own attachments to adults and permit him to seek out interactions with almost every student. Frequency of contact promotes intimacy. Regular interaction with the same group of adults allows students to bring more problems to the surface. Regular interaction with the same group of students provides teachers with increased opportunities to mediate circumstances that might otherwise allow students to fall through the cracks, whether the cracks are personal or academic.

The small size of the school also permits the administration to focus on students rather than on organization and control, areas that large schools cannot avoid if they are to function. Mack is forever "bugging teachers about which kids are not in class." Rituals designed for cutters and latecomers are overlaid with humor, but student cutting and lateness are taken quite seriously. Mack will call students' homes. Cutters must submit a writing assignment. A parent conference may be held. Latecomers may be denied the right to participate in their class's enticing and dynamic discussions, reminding them that their lateness is an abrogation of responsibility to their classmates and teachers. Students get the message that UA wants them in school, and they are reassured by the relentlessness of the message.

Use of Space. Space is organized to provide maximum opportunity for caring interactions. Teachers' desks and belongings are not located in classrooms. Rather they are in the mazelike office that is packed with books and computers, along with the desks of all other UA staff, from codirectors to secretary. Isolation for either teachers or students is virtually impossible even in a physical sense. Here, there are always various combinations of duos and trios of students and adults huddled around and across the desks in discussions, meetings, and encounters. The pleasure and fun staff and students take in engaging one another, and the humor and delight inherent in their interactions, are palpable. Students cherish the small acts of intimacy that symbolize personal bonds of attachment, affection, belonging, and privilege, for example, sharing teachers' food, or chatting about calling them at home late at night, or teasing them. It is here that students see and hear adults, primarily their teachers, casually and deliberately raise issues, debate ideas, argue and cajole on the phone, and discuss problems. It is here they see adults quite naturally enacting an intellectual community. It is here the students experience a community of practice that they can try out in their classes.

The office, the spiritual center of the school, features a wall celebrating the school culture with cartoons, notes, and signs that lovingly mock everything: "Don't ask 'why'

unless you're prepared for a forty-five minute answer," one sign cautions. Cartoon strips by students parody characteristics and dialogues of faculty members. The majority of cartoons and notes celebrate Mack as UA's father/director. Typical are: "Dear Herb, I hate you. Love . . ."; or "We need paper towels in the girls bathroom, Herb. Get them!"; "Herb's Law: Thou shalt not be late; Thou shalt always do your work . . ." The wall is emblematic of a family context that enables students to play out and work out their adolescent ambivalence about dependency and identity.

The office and the adjacent common room are a hub of human interaction. They provide many diverse opportunities for communication and encounters that encourage students and teachers to know one another collectively and individually and in academic and social contexts. Human bonding, the cement of a community, becomes inevitable, and UA students learn that a school can be both educational and personal.

Structures and Processes Promoting Self-Esteem

Students need to feel valued and in fact be valued by their teachers and school community. UA has developed several mechanisms and practices designed to ensure that students feel valued, including the student advisory system, the Student Committee, and the pervasiveness of choice throughout the life of the school, including even the admissions process. These practices inform students that what they think, how they feel, and what they want and need are important enough to be listened to and acted on by the school community. They encourage students to make an investment in the school and in the educational experiences it will offer. They invite students to care for their community by taking responsibility and by participating in it.

The Student Advisory System. In the advisory system, each student is assigned an adult advisor and belongs to an advisory group. The ratio of students to advisors ranges from 10 to one (for a new teacher) to 20 to one with experienced staff. Advisories meet weekly for one hour. The advisor and students discuss any issues that are of relevance and concern to the students -- personal or academic -- for example, time management skills, rules, graduation, and college. Advisors facilitate discussions around school policies ranging from the policy on visitors to that on proficiency requirements. Students will discuss their role as school guides and their responsibilities to new students. Advisors will facilitate discussion ranging from issues raised by the proficiency requirements to AIDS education. Since UA does not have a system based only on credits, what does it expect students to do? Frequently, the students who serve on the Student Committee will lead the discussion on issues that arise in the Student Committee, for example, rules, social events, field day, and policies. The advisory provides a formal but personal context for staff to know students and for students to express themselves.

The Student Committee. The committee is composed of representatives of advisories. It meets weekly to discuss schoolwide issues of concern. It makes recommendations to the staff. Recently debated issues include the school policy on graffiti, food in class,

consequences for lateness, school spirit, trips, and the design of school jackets.

Choice. Urban Academy demonstrates the use of choice to create conditions for effectiveness (Hill, Foster, and Gendler, 1990). Choice is integral to the life of the school from admission to graduation. Students must choose to attend UA, and students will plan their time and circumstances for graduation in consultation with their advisor and staff. Some students will graduate in the traditional four years, some will take more time, and others will opt for a GED.

Admissions Process

Because Urban Academy is designed to serve "students who have selected it for its small setting and its commitment to increased student participation and sense of community" (Urban Academy Application, 1990), the school's application and admission process attempts to provide applicants with the information and experiences necessary for them to make an informed choice about enrollment because enrollment is viewed as a commitment. As a result, the admissions process is emblematic of the culture of the school as well as a student's first experience with it. The admissions process is careful to articulate both school and teacher expectations as well as the intellectual, academic, and social-emotional value system. UA expects students to "participate in a learning experience emphasizing research, discussion, and analytic thinking . . . arrive on time, to remain until the end of the day and to attend all classes during the day, arriving punctually at the time they begin." The acquisition of subject-area information is as important at UA as the way in which that information is used: "Do students raise questions about the facts they learn? Does their education enable them to analyze the world around them? Can students relate concepts and draw independent conclusions?" (Urban Academy Application, 1990) Again, the significance UA places on individual student voices rather than on an "official voice" reinforces the sense that the educational community at UA values its students and the ways in which they experience their world. Contrary to conventional schools, where acquiring official knowledge silences students' voices, at UA students' perspectives and interpretations count for something, are visible and audible.

In order for applicants to obtain a sense of school life, they are required to spend a day at UA, during which time they attend classes, assess themselves on the learning characteristics necessary for success at UA (e.g., risk-taking, working in groups, attacking ideas not people), write an essay and a response to a reading, take a math assessment test, and answer some open-ended questions that provide insight into their school history and expectations. Applicants go out to lunch with UA students (who then give feedback to the staff) and are interviewed by a staff member (who carefully explains the expectations for UA students, the school's educational philosophy, and its instructional program).

The entire staff reviews applications. If there are no questions about an applicant, Jachim and a codirector make the final admission decision, which is based on a constellation of factors: ethnic and socioeconomic diversity, applicant's desire to attend UA, applicant's

need, the ability of UA to meet the needs and expectations of the applicant, and available space. (Urban Academy is committed to remaining a small school.) This assessment process is used not to screen students, but to ensure a range in intellectual ability in the school and to ensure that the school's mission is well suited to the applicants' needs.

The admissions process makes the Urban Academy a chosen community. Chosen, however, does not mean elite -- for the Urban Academy's students come from diverse schools and backgrounds, ranging from New York's select high schools such as Bronx Science to alternative schools, to local, zoned neighborhood high schools, which are often the repositories of students who have no other choice. They range from affluent to homeless and undereducated to highly skilled. Chosen means a context of commitment, responsibility, and interdependency in which school and teacher expectations become powerful forms of caring, powerful statements of belief in the capacity of students, particularly vulnerable students, to succeed. For students, choosing the Urban Academy becomes not only a decision to return to school, to begin the struggle of recommitting to themselves and to their own growth, of taking responsibility for and control of their lives; it is also a commitment to other human beings and to a community.

Choice as an Instrument for Responsiveness

Goals and Outcomes. With the support and guidance of staff members, students are expected to devise an educational plan that includes setting short- and long-term educational goals and devising ways of evaluating whether they are achieving their goals (see Appendix 1). The school's expectation that students have short- and long-range goals, that together the student and the school will mark the achievement of these goals, is emblematic of the school's choosing to believe in the student's capacity for achievement and a meaningful future. The school's enactment of its belief in students whose history is marked by low confidence in their ability to achieve goals is a manifestation of caring that supports the self-caring necessary for achievement.

Curriculum. Choice, which is integral to UA's curriculum, is evident in the school's course catalog (see Appendix 2). More like a college syllabus than a high school course listing, this catalog describes the course offerings for each semester and delineates individual course expectations. Students use the catalog to choose courses. Courses are listed in different groupings (like a Chinese menu) and students choose from within these groupings, rank-ordering their preferences. For example, one grouping includes Individual Inquiry, Advanced Spanish, Computer, Calculus, Sexist Society?, Law, and *Introduction to African Literature*. (Students would rank-order the courses in this grouping according to their preferences. Students are asked to say what class they want most and why.) After considering students' preferences, the staff assigns them to courses on the basis of academic and social needs and individual and group needs, that is, state and school graduation requirements, the need to be given first choice, group chemistry, and class size. This process both acknowledges and satisfies students' demands within the context of their needs. Again, the school's responsiveness to students' needs and preferences becomes emblematic of caring.

Organizing for Success and the Prevention of Failure

Organizing a school for success and the prevention of failure means struggling to make all of its components -- curriculum, pedagogy, schedule, program, and structure -- work together to create an institutional and professional climate and culture in which human beings both are and feel valued, in which human beings can achieve fulfillment through their work and relationships. If students are not going to fall through the cracks, then teachers cannot either. The features that prevent students from falling through the cracks -- caring, people-centeredness, the commitment to a shared vision of education and its practice, and the value of community -- are the very features that prevent teachers from the isolation, alienation, low-level commitment and craftsmanship, and burnout that characterize many highly bureaucratized schools. For teachers, this means role diversity, respect for complexity, individual control over activity and time, a shared understanding of what constitutes good practice, and opportunities for innovation and adult collaboration. It means organizing around the needs and interests of teachers as well as students. It means releasing teachers to achieve the idiosyncratic student-teacher-subject triangle that Sizer (1984) identifies as the crux of effective education. It means reconceptualizing teacher roles and teaching work. UA has several mechanisms that professionalize teaching work, freeing teachers to be more responsive to students' needs.

Reconceptualizing Teacher Roles

By adopting a policy of "undifferentiated staffing," UA teachers take on diverse roles that increase the opportunities and contexts in which students have access to them and in which they can be responsive to students' intellectual and social needs. Since students interpret access as caring, the school's adoption of a structure that increases opportunities for multiple forms of access increases its likelihood for achieving success. Teachers at UA are instructors, confidants, counselors, advisors, and mentors. Access is formally structured by the school through the mechanism of advisories. Students can and do, however, initiate informal encounters with faculty, increasing their access to them as needed. Teachers instruct students formally in regularly scheduled classes and tutor them in planned and unplanned sessions, sometimes individually and sometimes in groups. Less conventionally, they are invited speakers in one another's classes, and along with occasional guests, they are panelists, debaters, and impostors (teachers who feign expertise or a position on the debate topic) at class and school events.

Teachers assume organizational responsibilities, such as admission or attendance, that bring them into contact with students in contexts that provide information about their lives and histories. For example, as the teacher responsible for student admission, Nancy Jachim becomes acquainted with applicants not only as potential students, but as whole people. Through the interviews she conducts, she obtains information about students' pasts as well as their present circumstances and concerns. As a result, she brings a fuller portrait of students to her roles as classroom teacher and staff member.

Teachers also take on a parenting role and, in some cases, become a surrogate family for students whose life circumstances require such intervention. The school understands that students' survival needs must be met before they can be responsive to the school's educational agenda. UA has found homes for students who had none, health care for students who were ill, and the time to listen to the smallest as well as the largest problems and concerns. UA embraces the parental role in response to the most compelling needs of adolescents, especially vulnerable adolescents, because it understands that students with damaged self-esteem and histories of failure and disappointment require such nurturing in order to be able to relinquish their defenses and once again make an investment in school and themselves. UA transforms the role of school-as-educational-institution into school-as-educational-community-and-family, cautiously protecting students and itself from the reenactment of dysfunctional families by insisting that family means responsibility, commitment, and reciprocity for everyone.

Sharon's* story illustrates how the role of staff-as-family is enacted at UA. "Urban took over where my parents left off when they died," Sharon explains. "They gave me an education every day. They made sure I got my Social Security check and [that] I knew my tenant rights. They even found me a job." UA was Sharon's fourth and last high school. (In fact, Sharon graduated in June 1990.)

The multiple roles adopted by UA faculty provide students with multiple opportunities for interaction with adults in various contexts. The degree of access generates opportunities in which adults can play significant roles in the lives of students to mediate as circumstances dictate and to integrate caring into the routine functioning of the school.

Undifferentiated staffing casts a spotlight on the limitations of the conventional practice of compartmentalized staffing that fragments the teaching role into narrow, uniform, and discrete functions only to restrict students' access to teachers as well as teachers' opportunities to be responsive to the individual needs of diverse students. Whereas the practice of undifferentiated staffing invites teachers to invent and enact roles that they believe will increase their efficacy and bring them ever closer to achieving their goals, the traditional school-as-factory model discourages and restrains such creativity, flexibility, and commitment. Undifferentiated staffing embeds caring into the routine functioning of the school, whereas compartmentalized staffing precludes it.

Reconceptualizing Teaching Work

Undifferentiated staffing helps UA free teachers from the burden of being deliverers of an unnegotiated, static curriculum. As a result, there is no typical teacher or typical teaching program as in conventional schools, where the assignments of the majority of teachers are shaped to conform to a contractually specified number of classes for a contractually specified number of minutes. In conventional schools, any one teacher's schedule is easily interchangeable with another's and teachers work in isolation from one another. At UA, however, each teacher's schedule is carefully crafted around the unique

constellation of student and school needs and the teacher and his or her interests and talents. People drive structures as opposed to structure driving people.

Avram Barlowe's schedule is a good example:

8:00 A.M. - 8:30 A.M.: Informal time for students, colleagues, and preparation in the UA office.

8:30 A.M. - 9:25 A.M.: First Period: Individual Inquiry course. Each student is engaged in individual reading; this is designed to help students build a reading habit -- become readers -- and to create a reading environment at UA. This course was created as a result of the regular staff meetings at which teachers regularly discussed the reading needs of students.

9:25 A.M. - 10:15 A.M.: Second Period: American History course. Barlowe describes this course as very intense and requiring a great deal of preparation. Designing this course posed many challenges for Barlowe: selecting the possible directions, presenting various points of view that would stimulate student thinking, acquiring source materials, creating challenging and appropriate assignments and experiences, and primarily locating his voice and a personally meaningful launching point so that his teaching would reflect conviction and passion.

10:15 A.M. - 10:25 A.M.: Break for students. Barlowe may chat with students about the class, or prepare for his next class, or continue an ongoing dialogue with a student, or share a snack.

10:25 A.M. - 11:15 A.M.: Third Period: Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) Homework Lab. Barlowe is the collaborating teacher with a professor at BMCC for a course in which UA students are enrolled along with BMCC students. In the BMCC Homework Lab, Barlowe helps the students analyze the BMCC assignments and complete them. He teaches them the skills necessary for doing college assignments, for example, outlining skills and drafting papers. This is an example of a teacher using his professional judgment to make curricular and instructional decisions in the shaping of a "client-oriented" course. Barlowe refers to the BMCC Homework Lab as a "supply-side course," which teaches students how to do the assignments for another teacher. He supplies the students with the kinds of interventions, skills, and supports that middle-class parents routinely provide for their children and that give them access to institutions of higher learning. As a mediating agent, Barlowe takes on a sociopolitical role, increasing the opportunities for his students' social mobility by increasing their access to education.

11:15 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.: As lunch break begins, Barlowe leaves UA to travel to BMCC, where he will attend the hour-and-a-half class along with his students. After the class, he will meet with the instructor to analyze the students' responses, discuss

what the instructor wants them to do, and suggest ways of structuring assignments. He also provides professional development in the inquiry method to other BMCC faculty who teach UA students. This aspect of Barlowe's work is designed to take him out of and beyond the school. He is able to obtain firsthand information that he can immediately use in his practice -- the *Homework Lab* course -- to provide students with the skills they need to succeed. Barlowe's innovative relationship with another educational institution challenges his creativity and intellect and encourages him to function as an inquirer and problem solver. If the BMCC-UA collaboration is to succeed, Barlowe must have the freedom to invent his own roles and construct the experiences his students need to succeed. Barlowe's work in the BMCC collaboration demonstrates what Devaney and Sykes refer to as a "professional" level of responsibility (Devaney and Sykes, 1988, p. 3).

3:00 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.: Meetings back at UA. There may be a staff meeting, a meeting with a codirector, meetings with students, or conferences with visitors eager to learn about UA, or Barlowe may use this time to prepare for a course, seek out and interview guest speakers for a course, or locate and mobilize other resources.

Looking at Barlowe's work, we see how the role of teacher is shaped by the demands of the work: Barlowe is a teacher in the conventional sense, teaching classes, but in addition, he is a collaborator, a consultant to a college professor, a curriculum developer, an instruction coordinator, a learner reflecting on his work at a meeting with his school's codirector, a researcher gathering data on students' responses in a college course, a learning analyst solving the learning problems of his students and making curricular and instructional decisions based on his professional judgment, a discussion leader and resource for visitors to UA, an entrepreneur accessing and mobilizing resources for his courses, a colleague struggling with pedagogical issues and sharing his professional expertise at staff meetings, and an advocate, mentor, mediator, and counselor to his students.

Creating a Climate for Professional Practice

Teachers at UA are expected to have an expansive view of their work. For example, Barry Fox's work, like Barlowe's, takes him beyond the school. He teaches at UA only four days a week so that on the fifth day he can provide teachers in another high school with staff development in the inquiry method. Fox is continually stretching his boundaries as a practitioner of the inquiry method as he hones his skills as a staff developer. Wally Warshawsky's schedule is organized so that he can pursue his research on religion and philosophy. Warshawsky's research forms the basis of his UA courses in research, philosophy, and religion. His sense of himself as a scholar and his identity and practice as a researcher influence his practice as a teacher: He requires students to search for what they do not know in their research projects and to form a knowledge base from their discoveries. These outside commitments enrich not only the teacher as a vital, self-initiating, lifelong learner who serves as a real model of these qualities; they enrich the school.

The structure of work at UA illustrates how a school that adopts a policy of flexible scheduling can, within the same budgetary constraints as conventional schools, provide teachers with opportunities to regulate their time. This is something most teachers, unlike other professionals, do not have the opportunity to do. UA will hire teachers who want to teach only part-time. UA will provide other high schools with professional development in exchange for a teaching unit so that, for example, Fox can do professional development one day a week at another school. UA's policy and practice of flexible programming and scheduling create systemic capacity for diversification of teacher roles and teaching work without disrupting the continuity of the instructional program. When teachers are engaged in activities other than direct work with their students, as in the case of Fox, UA's instructional program is not depleted. Nor is the school day or the instructional continuity of a course interrupted by substitutes because there is no need to "release" teachers or to cover their classes. Teachers' programs and the school schedule include time for the other work. Teachers at UA team-teach frequently and visit each other's classes regularly. Although courses prepare students in the traditional basics and meet state requirements, the form they take is idiosyncratic, as described below.

Teachers regulate teaching at UA. They exercise a high degree of autonomy and decision making in their areas of expertise. In fact, the school builds its instructional program around teachers' expertise. The instructional program is designed through a collaborative process that begins at a staff meeting. Teachers discuss what they want to teach within the context of the required graduation proficiencies and students' needs and demands. Afterward they meet privately with Mack to clarify and flesh out their courses. Each teacher makes the final decision about teaching his or her course.

But it also results in innovative courses such as Latin American Literature, Mortal Issues, Mathematics and Ancient History, and Novels: Getting to Like Them (for students who have not succeeded in reading novels). Fox's Evolution course combines science and politics so that students learn not only about evolutionary theory but also the historical and political context in which science is embedded. Because Fox's course challenges the conventional curricular presentation of science as apolitical, students must confront the influence and impact of politics on science throughout history. UA supports innovative curriculum and courses with entrepreneurial and political ingenuity, seeking out private funding by networking with potential foundation and corporate partners and then persuading them of the value of sponsoring innovative activities. The results have been courses that provide public school students with unique experiences: One course on the civil rights movement took students to a Mississippi reunion of 1960s civil rights activists, where they recorded history firsthand. Another course on urban communities took students to England to compare a British community with an American one.

Reconceptualizing the Instructional Program

Since the Urban Academy would hardly be successful at reengaging students in the same type of education that originally alienated them from school, UA organizes for success

and the prevention of failure by reconceptualizing the structure and content of the instructional program. Urban Academy's school day begins at 8:30 A.M. and ends at 2:55 P.M. The schedule is more like that of a college, with most classes meeting several times each week rather than daily (see Appendix 3). Time blocks for classes vary from 55 minutes to two and one half hours. Breaks punctuate the day, giving students time to snack and socialize. Most classes take place in the school. UA does have, however, structured external learning experiences that enable students to use the city as a classroom -- from community service internships, which are required, to classes at Lang College and Manhattan Community College, to the streets of various neighborhoods where students conduct surveys for their course research or apply mathematical abstracts to real life situations, to extensive use of college and city libraries. Classes at UA are fashioned as seminars characterized by discourse, debate, and reflection. Students and teacher sit in a circle to facilitate ongoing discussion; everyone is called by his or her first name.

The collegelike structure of UA's instructional day and week encourages the practice of undifferentiated staffing and innovative and varied curriculum. Instead of the predictable four-year sequences of subject-area courses (e.g., English 3 or English 8), in which the scope and sequence are predetermined regardless of students' or teachers' needs or interests, UA offers specific courses such as Latin American Fiction, Novels, and Introduction to African Literature, which are of interest to both the teachers who develop them and the students who elect to take them. Such courses in traditionally organized high schools would be offered in addition to the required scope and sequence. At UA, these courses fulfill the language arts requirements because they develop students' skills as readers and as writers. At UA the courses students find interesting and engaging are the courses that fulfill the requirements, as opposed to bureaucratically organized schools in which the interesting and engaging courses are what students take after they have taken the required courses (that is, if they have time and space in their schedules).

One might ask if, in the context of curricular innovation, state requirements are met and students get what they should. The answer to both questions is an emphatic yes. Because of the Partnership Agreement in the New York State Compact for Learning, which encourages innovation, UA's curriculum meets state requirements. Because there is no ability tracking, despite the wide range of skill levels in language and math, students get equitable access to knowledge and opportunities to learn, which is what they "should" get. Since all courses are expected to provide students with rigorous challenges and enrichment, students cannot opt out of hard work by choosing easy courses. UA does not expect the mere presence of rigorous demands, however, to raise standards of student performance, especially when students have had habits of poor performance. Increased demands are coupled with increased support. When UA students slip up, which many do, UA supports them with counseling, tutoring, homework labs, courses that teach the discipline and habits necessary to be a successful student, and nagging encouragement (see Appendix 4). Because the school and the staff take an assertive, proactive stance to make sure that all students are able to meet the challenges and demands of rigorous academic coursework, UA increases their access to such coursework and to a higher level of education. Ultimately this policy

has the power to provide UA students with increased opportunities after they graduate. This is a significantly different institutional response to variation in students' intellectual capacity from the common practice of secondary school tracking. Where practices such as tracking diminish equity (Oakes, 1985), practices such as UA's use of mediating process courses, like Barlowe's homework lab, increase equity.

UA defines the issue of "what students should get" as that which will help them succeed in their pursuits after they have left UA. In all instances that means being productive and responsible citizens, and in most instances that also means going to college, where students will need analytic thinking skills, writing skills, and perseverance skills, that is, the discipline to be a successful student. As a result, the Urban Academy has not so much abandoned the traditional content as reformulated it. For example, American history is taught through the careful and thoughtful examination of issues and interpretations surrounding critical historical events, such as Columbus in the Western Hemisphere, rather than reading about Columbus's exploits in a textbook and memorizing dates.

UA staff do not shy away from controversial interpretations of historical events. Rather, they believe that events by their nature are controversial and that students' exposure to diverse points of view will force them to engage in the critical examination of evidence and the construction of arguments to mount those points of view. It is not as important to UA that students emerge with any particular point of view as that they emerge with the informed understanding that, given the same data, well-meaning, intelligent, reasonable people can come up with diametrically opposed interpretations. Not only does such an approach require students to acquire more facts than traditional doctrinaire teaching would, but the process of this approach teaches respect for American democratic traditions, specifically American values of diversity and freedom of speech. Projects and papers require students to develop their own theories by using content data. Students are judged on the rigor of their thinking and their use of sources and information, not their capacity to remember a textbook compilation of information.

Merging School and Student Agendas

Organizing for success and the prevention of failure means merging student and school agendas. Jachim explains the teacher's agenda:

> The teacher's agenda is curriculum. Students have a different agenda. If the teacher connects with the students, the students will accept the school values. They will achieve. The student's agenda is to relive the parenting experience -- caring, personal contact. UA students need the caring and attention. They want to be loved, to be beautiful and attractive. They are slouching toward success . . . not pursuing it ardently.

Caring means believing in the students, especially when they do not believe in themselves. Barlowe explains this as "an overriding optimism; that whatever the problem,

we can fix it." This is what the 1979 Rand "Change Agent Study" refers to as the "teacher's sense of efficacy" (Berman and McLaughlin, 1979, p. 137). It is significant, as McLaughlin and Marsh point out, because of the high correlation between the teacher's sense of efficacy and student improvement and the achievement of program goals (McLaughlin and Marsh, 1990, p. 225). UA teachers never give up on the students, even when students beg them to. Teachers demonstrate their belief in the students by providing them with personal and academic challenges on the one hand and "tolerating their regressions" (as Barlowe puts it) on the other.

Warshawsky's instructional strategies exemplify how UA challenges students to achieve high performance standards, provides the support necessary for them to overcome their resistance, and tolerates regressions. Students in Warshawsky's math class are encouraged to work in self-selected teams of twos and threes so that they have opportunities to discover their own idiosyncratic strategies for solving math problems as well as to learn that the strategies of their peers are also idiosyncratic. Warshawsky does not dictate any one right way. He encourages students to pursue their diverse learning styles and strategies in a context of collaboration. He even encourages students to work in pairs on tests. At first, Warshawsky explains, they do not understand this structure: "When kids arrive they must adjust to the idea that they have to do the learning. They don't understand this." He is not going to feed them formulas for solving problems because he wants them to develop and internalize feelings of capacity and confidence, to "feel able to approach problems, to try them, when no teacher is around." He explains that they "always wind up working in teams because they learn that they learn more by arguing it [the math problems] out."

In Warshawsky's class, students construct their learning environments by opting to work alone or in teams and by choosing their team members. Because their choices and decisions can result in increased math competency, the students become more conscious of the impact their learning environments can have on their achievement. They take more responsibility for changing the structure of the class so that they can learn more. In fact, the idea to take tests in pairs actually came from a student who convinced Warshawsky that it was a logical extension of the class structure.

Warshawsky demonstrates his confidence in the students by trusting them to self-select their teammates despite the fact that the students range in skill level from having no basics to having passed three Regents exams. Since Warshawsky wants his students to "learn as much math as they can," rather than get as many right answers as they can, the self-selected teams turn out to be academically heterogeneous because students select teammates on the basis of compatibility rather than academic skill. Compatibility, necessary for effective teamwork, not math ability, turns out to be the determining factor that enables students to "learn as much math as they can." Warshawsky's concept of team provides task clarity. As their selection criterion reveals, students eventually learn that effective collaboration can help them achieve the goal when the collaborators bring diverse and complementary, rather than similar, skills to the group.

Warshawsky's class also provides support for students to take responsibility for overcoming their fears about math and the obstacles of their former failures. Frustrated, math-phobic students are permitted to walk out of Warshawsky's class when they cannot take it any more, but they must agree to return. Each time they need to leave, they must agree to return sooner. Warshawsky's strategy mediates the need of students to cut class altogether.

Jachim too has developed strategies for helping students surmount their resistance. When students in her literature classes walk out because of frustration, they find Mack, discuss their grievance with him, and then feel able to return to class. Because UA has created strategies for students to deal with conflict in the academic arena, the chances of students becoming alienated, needing to cut, or needing to drop out are reduced.

One of the most successful UA strategies is the agenda lesson. This the teacher's plan for implementing inquiry teaching/learning that is the educational core of the school. In inquiry teaching/learning, courses are organized around the in-depth exploration of questions rather than around the coverage or acquisition of bodies of knowledge or information. Because the agenda lesson is constructed around possibilities, it enables the teacher to pursue those possibilities that emerge out of students' responses. As a result, teachers are prepared and expect to shape the learning experiences to the interests and needs of the learners. For example, in the Evolution course, the teacher might initiate discussion from several points, such as fossils or mythology. If students pick up on myths rather than on fossils, the teacher is cued to pursue that direction.

Jachim points out that teachers must be sensitive to content that initially may be intimidating to students. She advises, "Keeping in mind the goal -- intellectual confidence -- enables teachers to discard content that may at a given point be too intimidating." To do otherwise would defeat the goal: "Kids would cut out." Jachim believes, "If it's too quiet, if you [the teacher] are following your agenda, you may be the only one responding." At UA, the achievement of a predetermined lesson -- the teacher's agenda to the exclusion of the student's agenda, which defines the successful teaching of the traditional developmental lesson expected in most schools -- would be considered a failure in the teaching/ learning process.

Jachim and Warshawsky exemplify how UA teachers are professionally prepared for and respectful of the uneven learning and developmental patterns of their students. Ultimately, the respectful environment is also the caring environment. It supports students to do and be their best; it understands and accepts them when they slip; and it helps them to recover themselves and get back on course.

Chapter 3
Structures for Responsive and Responsible Practice

As Jachim's comments about the different agendas of students and teachers reveal, schools are confronted with competing priorities: The school's priority is academic, the students' is often social and emotional. If schools expect students to embrace their priorities, they need, as Jachim has pointed out, to embrace their students' priorities and to be responsive to their developmental needs. Adolescence is a time when students construct and reconstruct their identity, when their changing bodies challenge their former notions of themselves, when they are still testing limits, and when they rely most heavily on their peers to define their acceptability at the same time that they are making forays into the adult world.

Students define and evaluate learning in a personally pragmatic and social context. When asked, "How do you know you have learned anything here?" UA students did not explain whether they could do math better or write better. Nor did they discuss their grades. Rather, students reported on their sense of increased competence in the world. For example, Victor*, who will be graduating, reported on the increased confidence he now feels, which enables him to have discussions with individuals and groups who previously would have intimidated him. Victor explains, "It's nothing specific. My overall attitude toward school has changed. It's the way I've developed." Sharon explains how she copes with her life better. She knows why her SSI is being cut off. She knows what her rights are. She is working on other strategies to support herself. This would suggest that students assess their school experience holistically rather than compartmentally. They assess the impact it has had on the development of their sense of efficacy. As Victor explains, it is no one specific thing. Although the sense of competence Sharon and Victor feel undoubtedly incorporates the acquisition of increased knowledge and improvement in discrete skills -- for example, they probably do in fact write better and probably even know that they write better -- what registers, what they value, is their transformation: the changes in their capacities as people, their self-concept, and the possibilities of their lives. Education and academics are valuable to these students insofar as they have a practical and concrete impact on the way they conduct their lives.

Because the mission of a school is primarily academic/educational, however, it must always negotiate the tension between the students' emotional and social priorities and its own educational/academic priorities. A school's willingness and capacity to negotiate this tension will determine its ability to be responsible to its educational mission while being responsive to students. Indeed, as UA students take every occasion to remind anyone who will listen, there can be no responsibility without responsiveness.

The previous chapter suggested that the Urban Academy attempts to structure itself and students' learning experiences for academic and intellectual integrity that incorporates the social and emotional agendas of the students. The advisories and the Student Committee, the

agenda lesson, Jachim's walk-out students, Warshawsky's teams, and the school's organizational flexibility and challenging instructional program all increase the likelihood that UA's students will have multiple opportunities for success. UA has reconceptualized the role of teacher and the nature of teaching work and designed mechanisms and structures that create and sustain a sense of school as an intellectual community responsive to both students' and teachers' needs.

The following discussion will describe those practices and mechanisms that enable UA to be a responsive and responsible institution that ensures the proliferation and endurance of successful practice, the elimination of harmful practice, and an iteration between feedback and school development, improvement, and renewal. Some of these have already been discussed: staffing mechanisms such as undifferentiated staffing; curricular mechanisms such as the collaborative design of the instructional program; and organizational mechanisms such as flexible scheduling. Other mechanisms critical to UA's capacity to be responsive and responsible include curriculum planning mechanisms such as bimonthly curriculum meetings and the whole-school fall and spring curriculum projects; communication mechanisms such as weekly staff meetings and the regular dissemination of notes from various meetings; and staffing practices such as faculty hiring by peer-selection and opportunities for faculty collaboration. Following is a discussion of these practices and mechanisms.

Curriculum Planning Mechanisms

Bimonthly Curriculum Meetings. Two-and-a-half hour meetings twice a month are devoted only to curriculum and curriculum development; administrative issues are not placed on the agenda of a curriculum meeting. Curriculum at UA is not defined in the traditional, narrow sense of content or course of study. Although these are without doubt important issues at UA, how students interact with content is of equal significance. Therefore, students are also the curriculum -- for one another and for the teacher. A UA curriculum meeting reveals the dynamic relationship between students and curriculum, between curriculum and instruction, and among all three. The curriculum meetings also reinforce faculty collaboration because curricular decisions, which affect all other aspects of the school, are consensual. A description of a meeting follows:

> At the curriculum meeting to develop UA's summer reading assignment, students, in addition to staff, are present. The summer reading assignment is one strategy to achieve the goals of creating a reading environment at UA, of increasing the amount of reading students do, and of supporting students to develop a reading habit. While some students at UA are voracious readers, others are resistant, even aliterate -- students who are able to read but do not like to read and as a consequence do not regularly do the reading for their courses. Mack recalls recent staff-student conferences when teachers asked students, "What do you read?" He reminds the staff how fascinated they were by what students said they read and didn't read. What could be classified as "shallow but stimulating" dominates students' reading.

Jachim remarks that students have asked her to suggest books to read. She is eager to ensure that students have "structured reading over the summer -- something they are responsible for and that is mutually agreed upon" by staff and students. The issue of developing a reading list arises.

Mack asks the other staff members if they really want to give a summer reading assignment and if they really want to give it to newly admitted students.

Cook wants to. She believes the students will do the reading. The staff believe that students accept the value of reading more than they resist it. They discuss the question of how to support the reading habit. Barlowe points out that the cost of paperbacks might prohibit some students from getting books and therefore from reading. Jachim and Warshawsky believe that the staff should purchase the books for the young people. Barlowe points to the expense of that strategy. They have purchased books for students before and those books are gone. No one complains, because the missing books may be an indication that young people are reading. But finances are an issue.

The discussion turns to the nature of a reading assignment as a vehicle for motivating students to become readers. As teachers express their beliefs about reading and teaching, an in-depth discussion on the purposes of reading evolves. Warshawsky wants the students to "get through a complicated book once rather than read eight simple books." Mack is less concerned with the content than with young people's becoming critical readers and acquiring the ability to distinguish between poorly written and well written books. Bianca*, one of the students, remarks that she considers herself a "reader," and she enjoys Danielle Steele. Barlowe believes the reading assignment should be based on individual needs.

Mack suggests student input: "We shouldn't make up a book list for the kids. We should get books on the basis of kids' discussions about what they're interested in reading." Katherine*, a student, suggests that the staff make up a list for students who do not like reading or who do not know what to read. Does this imply that students who know what they want to read should make the decision by themselves? How much autonomy should the staff grant the students in building a school-related reading habit?

Warshawsky wants the students to read books they have never heard about, to experience what they have not yet experienced. Warshawsky sees reading as a means for students to expand their knowledge. He believes that UA should "have the books so kids can look at them and pick them rather than look at a list." The presence of actual books is more inviting than a list. Perhaps students will be interested in real books when titles on a list might elicit no interest.

Becky Walzer, UA English and computer teacher, recalls that in the past, students

told staff what they were interested in and Mack bought those books. The staff are concerned with the diversity that student interest will generate. Perhaps if the staff brainstorm a book list, suggests Josh Hornick, math, science, and law teacher, they will come up with diverse titles.

The discussion continues as the staff consider various strategies for building a reading environment and a reading habit. The strategies embody various responses to the explicit and implicit questions the staff raise: What should the nature of the reading assignment be? Who should decide? How should the decision be made? How do people choose books to read? How important is the process of choosing books in the building of a reading habit? What is the role of the teacher in the decision-making process? How directive should the teacher be in guiding the students' choices? What are the purposes of reading?

Barlowe synthesizes some of the strands of the discussion: A staff list would consolidate the resources of the entire staff; teachers should explore topics and titles with students in the student conferences. Perhaps the best solution would be a round-table discussion with staff and students. Jachim harkens back to Warshawsky's argument, "Kids might make a better decision if they see the books."

Hornick pushes for closure: "Let's generate a list and get the books." Walzer also wants to generate a list. She is concerned that students' options will be limited by their conference-teachers' experience and knowledge: "If the conference-teacher [i.e., the teacher who is responsible for convening and managing the student-conference] doesn't know a kid's topics of interest, the kid should be referred to staff that do."

Warshawsky is adamant about how people choose books and the significance of this process in generating a reading habit. He insists on an authentic process that corresponds to real life: "People choose books by looking at them, at their covers, and the first few pages. They don't choose by looking at a list of titles."

The students find Warshawsky's point compelling. If either teachers or students who are "readers" take students who are "reluctant readers" to bookstores, suggests Katherine, they could browse and teachers or students could recommend books. Bianca volunteers her services to help other students choose books and suggests that students offering such help be given a book. She continues, "You can guess what topics kids might be interested in by [the books] they're interested in." This might qualify as obvious, except that young people do not always let adults know what they are interested in.

Over good-humored groans from her peers, Jachim insists on telling a story. After recently taking some students to a bookstore and suggesting certain volumes, which they purchased, the students are still reading the books. Katherine underscores Jachim's point: "If kids go to a bookstore and buy a book, they're more likely to read it."

Mack addresses Hornick and Walzer's concern about the conference teacher's limitations in the area of literature: "The strength of the student conference is the teacher's conferencing ability with kids and with adults. The teacher is never going to know everything. But on the basis of the conference, you can get the kids books. The key is listening to kids so that you hear what they're willing to do and act on what they're willing to do."

This discussion of teachers' roles and skills is critical if teachers are to assume responsibilities that transcend the boundaries of their subjects and if they are to be responsive to individual students' needs. As staff members point out, UA will have to develop a strategy to compensate for teachers' limitations so that students are not penalized by them. Because the UA staff are in agreement about their goals, their conflict on this issue is not about assuming nontraditional teaching roles, which they already do, but rather about strategies for solving problems they themselves have raised. Because the faculty establishes goals by consensus, disagreements about strategies for achieving goals, rather than about the goals themselves, characterizes conflicts in the school.

Mack asks the staff if they want to follow up the student conferences by getting a few books for the students. If the staff focus the conference on students' interests, they will be able to target the selection of books to correspond to them. Although Mack brings the discussion to a close by offering direction on this issue, there is the sense that the discourse will continue.

The discussion demonstrates a recursive rather than a linear pattern of problem solving. The staff expect to revisit the issues that concern them. They expect to question and reflect prior to making decisions, and then they expect to adjust their decisions after they implement them. Because UA's pattern of inquiry encourages faculty to examine issues from multiple perspectives, it encourages them to raise the issues that concern them without fear of alienation or isolation. As several staff members begin to integrate threads of their colleagues' discourse into their own arguments, the weave of collaborative decision making is illuminated. The direction articulated by Mack embodies the diverse sensibilities, assumptions, and values held by individual faculty members, connecting them to reinforce a unified community.

The discussion also reveals the staff's tolerance for diversity, conflict, and ambiguity. There is no pressure to clarify issues before participants are ready. There is no pressure to come up with a definitive or single answer. There is no pressure to find a "program" that promises to solve the problem forever as a way of sparing the staff the inevitable and unavoidable anxiety of working it out themselves. While there is pressure to come to closure on a concrete issue that has a real-life deadline, there is no pressure or illusion that one strategy or one decision or one discussion will resolve the larger, more complex issue of creating a reading environment or enabling students to develop a reading habit. UA's ability to tolerate diversity and ambiguity enhances its flexibility in revisiting and re-solving the unending issues schools must face. As a result, the formulation and enactment of innovative

initiatives, such as the development of graduation proficiencies, tend to be thoughtfully, unhurriedly, and successfully constructed and implemented.

Whole-School Fall and Spring Curriculum Projects. These twice-yearly, monthlong projects are the educational rituals that begin each semester. They operationalize the idea of the Urban Academy as an educational community. They are produced through a process that engages the entire staff in inquiry. Behaving as though the school were a class and the staff were a collective teacher, staff members brainstorm to generate topics embodying their educational values and framing questions for study, topics that

- *raise authentic questions* for students such as "What is a community?" or "What is a good museum?" Questions are authentic when they require students to engage in a process of investigation and inquiry in order to come up with their own answers rather than a preconceived or "correct" answer.

- *are broadening*, that is, they require students to visit museums, study works of art, travel to different communities and neighborhoods, explore the cultures of different communities, and talk with people with diverse points of view.

- *require primary and secondary research* and the use of various research techniques and sources, including interviews, library work, statistical analysis, critical reading, writing, and presentation.

- *require external learning*, that is, using the city as a resource.

As UA staff "plan, prepare, and evaluate the topics, methods, and materials of teaching," they demonstrate the collegial behavior and "productive talk" that Little describes (1990, p. 178). UA staff debate possible topics for the project in order to select one. Then they frame the authentic question that will form the center of the project. Next, they plan activities for experiential learning so that the students will be engaged as active, investigative learners. For example, they determine the museums the students will visit and the exhibits students will focus on in those museums; they select print materials that will be used. They design the research aspect, for example, they determine the types of research methods students will be required to use, such as interviews or surveys. They then decide on the formats students should use in presenting their research, such as a paper, an oral presentation, or a debate. They decide on guest speakers. For example, for the museum project they invited a well-known professor of philosophy and aesthetics, artists, art historians, gallery owners, museum educators, and a museum curator to discuss with students the question "What makes a good museum?" and provided students with the time and the opportunities to question them. Finally, teachers plan the culminating activity and the evaluation. The culminating activity brings the entire school together as an educational community to share and celebrate their findings and experiences. This academic experience is both a means of reinforcing UA's values and an end in itself since students can increase both their knowledge and their skills as researchers and critical thinkers.

The three-pronged evaluation of projects provides several lenses through which the staff can gain insight into various aspects of the school. The staff evaluates each project as curriculum to determine if it accomplished what they thought it would, and they examine its strengths and weaknesses to learn what changes to make on the next project. For example, after critiquing students' use of libraries, the staff developed a library scavenger hunt taking students through a variety of tasks they will need to master in order to effectively use libraries as they undertake assignments requiring research skills. It requires students, for example, to get a photocopy of the front page of a newspaper printed on the day they were born. Then they must select one of the articles from that front page and use the ***Readers' Guide*** or Infomat to locate three references on the topic of the article.

The staff also examines the process and outcomes of group work. Finally, they examine the work of individual students, especially those who are new to UA and those with problems. Their examination of group and individual students' work provides the staff with information that they use not only for the next project, but in their classroom instruction and in their work with individuals.

The processes of staff debate, discourse, planning, and evaluation clarify and reaffirm what UA means by collaboration and inquiry, increasing the chances of effective implementation (Fullan, 1982). Although these planning sessions are designed to, and do, produce a curriculum, they simultaneously increase teachers' competency because teachers are experiencing what they are expected to implement. For example, if students are to assess and critique conflicting information about what constitutes a good museum, staff must first assemble the information, review materials, and make judgments about what to include, according to agreed-on criteria. They are engaging, on their own level, in the same critical-thinking processes that their students will have to engage in when they construct their definitions of what constitutes a good museum.

The project, both as a process of staff development and as an authentic curriculum project for students, demonstrates what Rosenholtz refers to as close alignment between task conception and program goals: "Because teachers collectively construct the plan it [comes] to have shared meaning and value" (Rosenholtz, 1990, p. 89). Because new and experienced staff work together, this practice of collaborative planning also transmits the educational and professional norms of the school by socialization (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 37).

Students work on the project in groups that mix continuing and new students. This grouping pattern provides continuing students with the opportunity to develop their competency in the inquiry approach, and it socializes new students to the norms of inquiry learning: Attacking ideas is acceptable; ad hominem attacks are not. Here is an obvious alignment between student and staff experience. The project enables students to build camaraderie around work, which solidifies their sense of UA as a community. The process of socialization achieves educational goals.

Communication Vehicles

Weekly Staff Meetings. Three-hour meetings are held every week, at which the agenda is students, teaching/learning issues, curriculum concerns, administrative issues, and school organization and development. This is one of several "regularized opportunities for teachers to share what they know [and] to consult about problems of practice" (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 41).

At weekly staff meetings, the staff look at both individual students and the school as a whole. By focusing on particular students, their experiences, their performance, their problems, and their growth -- by using a descriptive review approach -- teachers share and increase their information about particular students and students in general, develop diverse strategies for supporting student growth and learning, develop their own professional knowledge about new approaches, and dispel any sense of isolation. The staff meeting promotes collegiality and "practice that is client-oriented and knowledge-based" (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 25). The case-study approach triggers discussion of school policies and procedures. The format of the staff meeting is therefore dynamic: The discussion of how students are doing is played off against the structures and processes the school has developed to achieve its goals. Solutions and decisions emerge to keep the school responsible to its mission and responsive to students.

The staff discussion of Raj* provides an example of UA's process for being responsible and responsive. Raj has been admitted directly from junior high school, uncommon at UA but not unusual. Raj's academic performance is spotty and his motivation is inconsistent. His parents are immigrants who value the traditional school structure and believe that Raj is a failure because he is at UA rather than at Bronx Science or Stuyvesant, schools that did not accept him, or at other "good" (read conventional) schools such as Manhattan Center, which Raj could attend. Raj's parents' response to Urban Academy creates conflicts for him that, the staff believes, prevent him from making a full commitment to UA or to his own academic achievement there. What to do? Does Mack talk to the father? (Other staff have done so.) Does Mack recommend a transfer? Does the staff wait out Raj's ambivalence?

Through the lens provided by Raj's case, the staff confronts many issues of policy and practice:

- How effectively does UA handle new students?

- Should UA take freshmen who have never been to high school?

- How does UA support students through the process of transition necessary to adapt to UA?

- How much support should the staff be giving to students to help them adjust? Support is time, a limited resource. How else do the staff want to use their time?

- What are the best strategies for supporting students through the transition to UA?
  --through parental involvement
  --through subject matter
  --through teachers
  --through the student himself or herself
  --through required family conferences at report card time

- Should UA provide support to students whose parents are opposed to what it represents as an educational institution since such situations create potentially irresolvable conflicts for students? Or should UA refer those students to traditional schools, even knowing that the student, despite the conflict, will be better off at UA?

- Does UA's departure from traditional school conventions such as the distribution of report cards confuse parents? Does this confusion lead parents to lack confidence in the legitimacy and integrity of the education UA provides? How does parental conflict or alienation affect student performance and adjustment?

- Is the "way we teach" (i.e., inquiry) right or appropriate for all students?

- When is UA the right or wrong school for a student?

- How do you look at a student's growth?

- How do you communicate a student's growth? to the student? to the parent? What form should this communication take? How many teachers should be involved? Which teachers should be involved and on what basis should that decision be made? Should communication be uniform or based on individual needs? What is the goal of this communication?

The initial discussion about Raj leads the staff to identify an area that needs adjustment and to seek methods for making the adjustment so that the school can remain both responsive to students and true to its mission. By the time the meeting ends, although Raj's problems are unresolved, staff members have formed a committee to research and recommend a plan for communication on student achievement to students and parents.

At these weekly meetings, staff also have a formalized opportunity to confront the degree of alignment of purpose and practice in the school and to reveal, debate, and reflect on their own definitions and understandings of both the theory and practice of inquiry. This opportunity for dialogue fosters growth, reinforces a sense of community and teacher efficacy, encourages the development and refinement of a shared language, and demonstrates "reflection in action" (Sykes, 1983, p. 90). The discussion focuses on the presentation of a specific course and the academic and pedagogical questions raised by teaching it. The discussion of one course and one teacher's experience provides:

- *Collegial support for the presenting teacher* through compassionate listening (Costa, 1984), that is, nonjudgmental listening that actively seeks clarity and precision through techniques like paraphrasing and practical suggestions that add to knowledge.

- A window for *reflecting on other courses and other teachers' experiences.*

- The *opportunity for all teachers to increase their competency* as the suggestions to help one teacher can be incorporated into the repertoires of the other teachers.

- The *opportunity to reflect on the questions that frame teaching and learning at UA, to continue the discourse, and to reinforce the teaching and learning values of the school*. Again, the personal generates discussion of the global with each perspective serving to inform the other.

The discussion of Fox's Evolution course demonstrates this aspect of the staff meeting. Led by questions from Mack, Fox provides a snapshot summary of his course in which he describes his methodology and curricular organization. Fox raises questions and issues that reflect the range of pedagogy from "What do you do about kids who don't do the homework?" to "How do you get students to 'look hard' at what constitutes evidence?" He shares his dilemma as an inquiry teacher, "What do you do when the class goes in a direction that you are not prepared for?" Since UA values student collaboration in coursework, and since authentic learning will be idiosyncratic, reflective of the unique constellation of characters present, Fox's dilemma is not viewed as a teaching weakness or an event to be eliminated. Rather, Fox's dilemma is a challenge to be explored. It demonstrates how students' minds can be freed up when they are not pressured to conform to a teacher's preconceived construct. It demonstrates that this staff member is achieving the mission of the school and being responsive to the intellectual needs of his students.

As the staff listen to Fox, offer suggestions and strategies, and raise questions, teachers become resources for improving Fox's teaching. Simultaneously, the staff practice their own form of inquiry and reinforce the significance of inquiry in the culture of the school. Fox's "window on practice" evokes discourse that ranges from the mundane and practical to the sublime and time-honored traditions of knowledge and learning in Western civilization:

- Do the students use sources to support their points of view?

- How can you have conflicting ideas in your head?

- How do you develop skepticism?

- How can you find out something when you weren't there?

- How do you maintain faith in the wake of conflicting evidence?

- If you knock down evidence does it mean a theory is wrong?
- How do we know anything?
- How do we deal with the weight students give their experience as evidence?
- How will the astronomer [a guest speaker] be used in the class?
- Are kids switching positions mainly because of the class discussions?
- How scientific were Darwin's methods?
- Where were the origins of human life?
- How are we getting students to develop a knowledge base?

The questioning and discussion begin to raise questions of accountability regarding student progress. Since teachers have courses that place students in situations challenging their levels of frustration, how will the teachers evaluate what they have learned? Mack summarizes the discussion in terms of students' needs: "Kids' knowledge base is minimal; their interpretative base is maximal; their opinions rampant." He asks, "How far can you go with kids and have them get into complex issues?" He summarizes the strategies various teachers have used and have recommended to deal with difficult and complex issues and suggests that the next meeting continue with a focus on a specific course to elucidate strategies that deal with complex content.

Both the format and the content of the staff meetings leave no doubt that teaching is serious work, hard work, and intellectually challenging work. The meetings also demonstrate that learning -- defined as the construction of knowledge, the ability to mount and interpret evidence, the ability to tackle complex issues, ancient and modern, and the ability to present one's findings with rich and coherent documentation -- is not easily attempted, pursued, or achieved. Nor is teaching to these ends. But the Urban Academy demonstrates that it is possible. The dual agendas -- one focusing on a student's issues, the other focusing on a teacher's -- leave no doubt that a school can and indeed must have several (intersecting and overlapping) centers; in this way it increases its capacity to meet effectively the diverse needs of its students and achieve its educational mission.

Meeting Notes. These summarize staff and student committee meetings, are distributed to all members of UA, and keep communication open.

Staffing Practices

Faculty Collaboration. This provides opportunities for teachers to collaborate and promotes collegiality and professional development. Because UA teachers frequently team

teach, guest teach, and visit one another's classes, they know each other's strengths, teaching styles, and weaknesses. They have the opportunity to learn more about their students, to learn from one another, and to develop standards of practice. The frequency of intervisitation makes teachers aware, respectful, and supportive of the complex tasks each has set for himself or herself and for his or her students.

It is quite usual for teachers to be resources for one another. Warshawsky will be a guest lecturer in Fox's Evolution course. Several staff members will participate on panels where they will argue different points of view on a question. For example, on the question of what makes for a good education or a good school, several staff members, along with guests, participated on a panel in which each argued for one of the following points of view: home schooling, education designed to prepare students for the job market, education based on the assumptions of E. D. Hirsch, Jr., and education focusing on critical and analytical thinking. The panel members presented their points of view, rebutted one other, and responded to student questions and challenges.

Several courses are team-taught. In the 1991 spring term, two staff members taught Mortal Issues, a course on the value and meaning of human life. Two others taught The Supreme Court, in which students became justices and decided real cases that were currently before the federal courts. The collaboration and collegiality of staff provide a powerful model for student cooperation and reinforce the sense of community that UA fosters.

Because collaboration is pervasive from the planning of the instructional program to its implementation and to the critique of its implementation, because of the intensive communication mechanisms such as the weekly staff meetings at which faculty can analyze and correct their practice, because the school is small, and because teachers' most intimate spaces -- their desks and bookshelves -- are in open and shared space, mistrust and defensiveness do not emerge as issues. Everyone knows what everyone else is doing. No one is invisible; no one can hide. Teachers do not need to close their doors to do what they would define as the "right thing." Furthermore, the school's infrastructure supports this ethos: UA's flexible, collegelike schedule, which does not lock teachers into blocks, varies their nonteaching time and gives them the flexibility to visit one another. Responsiveness and responsibility require an environment in which the openness necessary for self-review is respected, where the need and desire for support are viewed not as a weakness but as a strength, and where the identification and analysis of problems are viewed as integral to the core of effective teaching.

Peer Selection. UA's hiring policy and practice is a collaborative, shared decision-making process in which staff select staff with student recommendations based on demonstration classes. Teachers apply for a position at UA, or in cases where people are recommended, Mack will pursue them. Prospective candidates are interviewed by Mack and then by the staff. The staff look for teachers who are "intelligent," have strong convictions, are flexible, feel comfortable with the inquiry approach to teaching, are not rigidly committed to conventional teaching, feel comfortable with an outspoken staff, and want to

teach the population of students at the Urban Academy. The interview process is primarily informal because, as Cook points out, UA "is looking to get a feel, a sense, of the person rather than 'right answers.'" Mack tries to ensure that as many staff as possible have an opportunity to converse privately with candidates to get a sense of them -- ultimately multiple impressions of the candidates in various contexts -- and to find out what interests them. Candidates sit in on classes to get a sense and an idea of the staff, the school, and the nature of teaching as well as the instructional program. Students then interview the candidates, and although their role is advisory, their responses are seriously considered. After candidates do a demonstration lesson or are observed in their teaching environment, the staff discuss hiring them. Decisions on hiring are made by consensus. UA's ability to regulate who teaches there is critical to its capacity to pursue and achieve its mission, to be responsive to its students, and to be responsible to its ethic.

Chapter 4
Assessment of Student Performance and School Performance

The Urban Academy sets both academic and personal goals for its students. As expressed in the UA brochure, courses are designed to "expand [the students'] knowledge of the universe" (Urban Academy, 1991b). In addition to this, students at UA are expected to hone their higher-level thinking skills, for example, their ability to analyze complex material, and to explore ideas with which they disagree. They are expected to develop research and communication skills, for example, the ability to develop and present a logical, well-documented argument and to write effectively. On the personal front, students are expected to change their self-concept from failure to success, to develop goals that take them into their future beyond UA, and to see themselves not as dropouts but as college students. UA hopes that the education and experience it offers will provide students with a sense of intellectual competence and intellectual confidence.

Intellectual competence and confidence are intricately and inexorably intertwined. Their development is both complementary and at times in tension. It involves providing support for taking risks along with setting standards for evaluating the extent to which difficult goals have been achieved. Each is essential to the existence of the other. Together, they form the foundation on which students construct a new self-concept and a new and expanded set of possibilities. And it is that new self-concept and new set of possibilities that propel students to take the risks of learning. How do teachers assess student growth on a daily basis and over a period of time? What do teachers see as indicators of student growth and progress? What are the formal and informal processes for making both the long- and short-term assessments?

Indicators of Growth and Progress at the Urban Academy

Since almost all of the students at Urban Academy have been alienated in their prior high school experiences -- as demonstrated by long-term absences, cutting, school phobia, and serious antisocial behavior such as use of weapons and fighting -- teachers use the following as indicators of growth in responsibility and maturity: consistent attendance at school and in classes, punctuality, staying in school, level and quality of participation, follow-through on assignments, and number and quality of homework assignments submitted. Jachim cites some of the indicators used to determine how students demonstrate social and emotional growth: They are able to get beyond what they perceive to be the arrogance of people and accept what they have to offer; they are able to achieve goals despite obstacles; and they are able to set realistic goals and be realistic about achieving them -- that means knowing their limits and developing strategies to compensate for them. Jachim describes how they express a sense of competence or confidence by a "can-do" attitude: "I can go to college. I can read a book. I can do math that isn't Wally-math [a reference to

Warshawsky's math classes]. I can do elsewhere what I do here." They take risks that demonstrate their new attitude and independence; they enroll in a college course at Lang College or Manhattan Community College with which UA has established links; they read books; they succeed in math courses taught by teachers other than Warshawsky; the quality of their work improves. Ultimately, students' ability to succeed in college and in life after having graduated from the Urban Academy is the most significant indicator of their growth.

Indicators of academic and intellectual progress include students' ability to

- *Read and interpret materials of varying difficulty*, for example, print material, political cartoons, graphs.

- *Ask sophisticated and complex questions*. For example, in the Mortal Issues class, students asked questions such as: "Were the first four days [in the biblical creation myth] what we know as days?" Or, "How do you believe in something you can't see? What do you base your decisions on to determine what you believe in when everyone looks at reality in a different way?"

- *Analyze an argument using evidence and documentation*. For example, in Fox's Evolution course, Luke* explained why he thought that the class could not yet come to a well-reasoned or documented conclusion on the question of the origins of life on earth: "What do we know at this point? We have only two points of view and two sets of facts." Lucy* discredited one of the points of view: "We got [the guest speaker's] point of view unopposed. If he had opposition, it would have taken credibility away from his argument." Jeffrey* argued that the guest speaker's "use of false evidence damaged his argument." Joe* argued that the speaker "had different facts, not wrong facts. His sources were different."

- *Integrate various sources to advance a point of view*, such as the experiences of a guest speaker, a film, or print material.

- *Shift points of view as a result of evaluating evidence*. For example, in Cook's Action Research course, students who endorsed tracking for academically advanced students altered their point of view after examining a national study on tracking reported in ***Education Week***.

- *Express themselves in writing*.

- *Listen to others*.

- *Consider points of view with which they disagree*.

- *Distinguish fact from opinion*.

- *Locate evidence for research projects.*

- *Use different sources around the city* (e.g., museums, government agencies) for research projects.

- *Use different methods of gathering information*: interviews, surveys, visual material, and print.

- *Demonstrate depth and insight.*

- *Adopt the school's values.* For example, students know that class participation is important; that questioning one's assumptions is important; that *ad hominem* tactics are forbidden; that the capacity for rigorous debate, discussion, and reflection is important; and that reciprocity with regard to their school community is important. Staff look for behavior that reflects these values.

- *Improve the quality of their work.*

- *Pass standardized tests.*

- *Speak persuasively.*

- *Speak publicly before a strange audience.*

- *Take a "devil's advocate" or unpopular point of view.*

- *Develop new interests within the context of a school assignment.* For example, a student in one of Warshawsky's classes developed an interest in photography while conducting research. He incorporated his photographs into his project.

- *Initiate improvement in the learning experience for oneself and others.* For example, in Warshawsky's class, a student suggested graphing algebraic problems so that the class could understand them better.

In order to determine whether learning has occurred, teachers look for improvement and changes in these indicators over the span of a course. For example, Barlowe looks at the character of student participation in class throughout his courses: Do students show initiative by going out on their own to gather information? Do they analyze evidence before presenting it in class discussion? Is there more evidence of analysis in their written work? Ultimately he asks what his students are able to do at the conclusion of the course that they were unable to do at its inception.

Formal Assessment of Student Learning

Aside from state tests, formal assessment practices are developed by the staff and reflect the school's learning indicators and value system. For example, since Urban Academy promotes self-reflection, it has designed and uses the *Student Self-Evaluation Scale* to determine students' assessment of their skills and abilities. The kinds of learning valued by the school are included: for example, communication skills (e.g., ability to ask questions), thinking skills (e.g., ability to consider points of view you disagree with), research skills (e.g., ability to use different sources around the city), task commitment, and confidence. At times, this assessment can form the basis of a plan initiated by students who choose the area in which they want to focus their growth.

Four times a year students receive *Academic Reports*, which are composed of teachers' comments on their work in courses. At the end of each semester, the Academic Report includes course grades in addition to teacher comments. This report succinctly communicates the students' achievement and progress in class participation, projects, written work, homework, and complexity of thinking as demonstrated by questions asked.

Also at the end of each semester, two or three staff members confer with each student in an oral examination format, reviewing the student's overall performance, teachers' reports, and specific pieces of work. This team obtains information from notes that all teachers keep and from staff conferences at which each student has been discussed. In addition to reviewing the student's work with him or her, the team poses questions. For example, one semester the team asked, "How do you feel about reading?" and "What do you like to read?" The entire staff define these questions at a meeting prior to the conferences. These questions and conferences not only assess student progress, but provide feedback on the school's effectiveness in meeting students' needs. Student responses have led UA to create a course called *Inquiry Reading* for students who did not read. The conference is also an example of UA's practice of making change on the basis of student needs.

UA recently developed its own proficiency requirements for graduation. These require student presentations, exhibitions, or portfolios in the areas that have constituted academic and community life at UA -- science, literature (fiction and nonfiction), contemporary problems, social science/history, math, community service, arts and culture, and contribution to the UA community -- and an outstanding piece of the student's work. The critical thinking and analysis and the diverse methods of presentation demanded of students for the proficiency requirements correspond to the demands made of them in their courses. As a result, the examination and graduation process is less a singular, unrelated event (as compared with Regents exams) than a logical extension and culmination of the school's learning process.

To demonstrate competency in literature, candidates for graduation must discuss a piece of fiction with an expert who is not on the staff of the school and demonstrate their proficiencies in critical thinking and oral presentation skills. The math proficiencies require

students to prepare one of the following: a science-fair-quality display of a scale model, a mathematical solution to a practical problem, an analysis of a game or puzzle, or a record of the historical significance of a number or number system. The science proficiencies require students to demonstrate knowledge and expertise in the scientific method by preparing either an abstract of an actual experiment, including the hypothesis, methodology, and conclusion, or a paper on a scientific topic (e.g., the extinction of the dinosaur) that demonstrates "the ability to construct a thoughtful research plan" (Urban Academy, 1991a). In the area of arts and culture, candidates must orchestrate a presentation based on their analysis of a work of art that they do not like. Interviews with supporters of the work must be included in the analysis. In their presentations, candidates must engage the audience in a process that facilitates their understanding of the work. In the area of contemporary problems, candidates must demonstrate their understanding of historical context and diverse viewpoints in a written analysis of a contemporary issue. In social science and history, candidates must prepare a historiographical research proposal, including a list of sources and an outline, and execute the proposal in a written analysis. To meet the proficiency requirements in community service, candidates must have obtained positive recommendations and participated on a panel discussing one aspect of their community service experiences. Candidates must demonstrate how they have made a positive contribution to the UA community in order to meet the school service requirement. Finally, candidates must select one outstanding piece of their work in the area of video art, computers, writing, foreign language, photography, music, or drama and present it to an audience of staff and students.

The proficiency requirements assess not only the breadth and depth of students' knowledge but their capacity to represent their knowledge in diverse and personal ways demonstrating that they have integrated and internalized their learnings. Learning at UA means that knowledge has changed students. This is significantly different from the state exams that assess knowledge superficially as demonstrated by students' ability to recall factual information primarily in a multiple-choice, short-answer, or, occasionally, short-essay format. This approach treats knowledge as monolithic, material acquisition. UA's requirement that students present their work to staff and students reinforces the value of school as a serious and professional educational community responsible for assessing the quality of its work, individually and collectively; celebrating its successes and critiquing its inadequacies; and designing the interventions and changes necessary for improvement.

Other formal assessment practices include:

- *Tests*: Standardized and teacher-made. Although Urban Academy does not support standardized tests, it does prepare students for them and wants students' SAT scores to increase because they determine access to institutions of higher learning. Standardized test scores are seen primarily as indicators of students' confidence and test-taking ability rather than of authentic learning. Teacher-made tests carry more weight in assessing students' authentic learning. Since UA is committed to inquiry learning, student achievement is determined by the growth indicators corresponding to the values of inquiry.

- *Projects*: A demonstration of student ability to conduct research.

- *Written and Oral Reports*: A demonstration of student growth in communication skills.

- *Staff Review*: Meetings at which teachers review students' work samples and discuss their classwork, their written work, and social issues (e.g., friendship groups). The emphasis is on directly observable evidence rather than hearsay. The purpose of the staff review is to develop appropriate educational plans for students. Teachers use their own observation skills to assess student learning; they take notes on what students say during class discussions and on the nature of their behavior. Over the course of a term, they review their notes to determine student growth. Is the nature of the questions and responses different? How? Are students' work habits different? How? Do they listen more reflectively to one another's opinions? Does their homework reflect carefully thought out responses?

- *Teacher Records*: Teachers keep records over time on the questions students ask in class and compare the questions asked at the beginning with those asked later on. Do they indicate greater depth? Increased complexity? Do their interpretations reveal an increased ability to analyze? For example, a teacher might assess students' ability to recognize and understand satire and assumptions in a Feiffer cartoon.

- *Exit Interviews*: UA faculty conduct exit interviews with students who are graduating. These interviews help students synthesize their experiences at UA. They confirm the areas in which students will need help and support, affirming the legitimacy of those needs by focusing students on the support mechanisms their colleges provide and strategies for accessing the needed support.

- *Guest Speaker Evaluation*: Teachers invite many guest speakers to UA classes. At the conclusion of the class, the guest speaker is asked to complete an evaluation of the students' responses, compare them with other groups to whom the speaker has spoken, and make recommendations on how the group could improve its performance (see Appendix 5). The information is then shared with the group, and it also becomes feedback for the staff on the school's progress in promoting student learning.

Both exit interviews and guest-speaker evaluations also provide UA with feedback on the school and its educational program that faculty can use as a barometer to assess the achievement of their goals.

Informal Assessment of Student Learning

Informal assessment practices are pervasive and ongoing at UA. Teachers are always discussing students, analyzing their responses to classroom practice and to the materials and

experiences presented to them. At almost every turn, they seem to share information about students' attitudes, problems, adjustment, and work. The space arrangements in the Urban Academy office make sharing and informality inevitable and easy for teachers to engage in.

Individual conferences between teachers and students occur as needed. They may be planned or spontaneous. At these conferences, teachers and students will discuss the student's progress, identify problems and solutions, and analyze the student's patterns of work and behavior that promote growth and create obstacles. Goal setting and resetting occur at individual conferences. Staff ask students to complete a form called "Future Plans," which can provide the basis for discussion. "Future Plans" asks students to articulate, no matter how vaguely, their thoughts on what they might do after graduation, and what they see for themselves eight or ten years in the future. Do they see a challenging future? Do they feel optimistic about their possibilities? Students' responses inform teachers about students' change -- their growth or regression -- in self-concept and self-confidence. These conferences are also opportunities for teachers to encourage the students to continue in their struggle to become serious students.

Assessment of School Performance to Determine Student Learning

As the discussion indicates, assessment -- of student and school performance, both formal and informal -- is ongoing. This is possible because the school has created structures to facilitate it. Many of them have already been discussed in other contexts, but they are important to mention again because of the role they play in this context: staff meetings, curriculum meetings, Student Committee meetings, advisories, and curriculum project sessions.

Assessment of school and student performance is particularly difficult to separate at UA. Since staff and students view the school as a community and themselves as invested, active members of that community, they feel free to give voice to what does not work as well as to what does work. Jachim points out that at UA, no one is unimportant. As a result, input on school improvement comes from all members of the school community. Regular opportunities for students and staff to examine school functioning, programs, and activities occur at the various meetings discussed earlier. Regular practices at these meetings increase the chances of change being successfully implemented; for example, decision by consensus gives everyone a stake in the success of a change. Debate and problem solving assure the staff that issues have been thoroughly examined and that their concerns have been aired and addressed.

The proficiency requirements are a good case in point. Despite their thoughtfulness and despite their close correspondence and appropriateness to students' experiences and UA's values of inquiry learning, proficiency requirements as initially used gave an unintended message to the students: They appeared to indicate that all that mattered was the final product. As a result of staff and student discussion and review, the proficiencies were

quickly revised so that they will occur in stages over the time that students are enrolled in UA and are closey linked to classroom work. Students will now build portfolios leading up to the proficiencies and will decide what work samples will be used for the proficiency requirements.

Disagreement and conflict do not threaten the staff because they are secure in their unity of purpose, mission, and values. In fact, conflict can serve to clarify the school's values as it has on grading. After much debate, the school revised its grading practice and instead of giving grades twice a semester, it gives them only at the end of the semester to encourage students to pay more attention to the teacher reports than to the grades. UA wants to instill the value that the substance of teacher reports is more important than grades so that students focus more on the learning process.

Staff are bound by their commitment both to students and to inquiry, which is the core of true educational identity and value system. UA is not just student-centered, but also people-centered, which means that it must work well for the staff as professionals. If the teachers are not challenged and learning, can the students be? If teachers are to model learning, does not their learning have to be authentic?

Both Barlowe and Jachim spoke about the availability of opportunities at UA for their own growth, for them to challenge themselves, to create new courses, to try different strategies for solving problems without worry of recriminations over errors or failures, and to do more than talk about making changes -- to actually make them. This is consistent with Griffin's view of schools "as places where everyone learns . . . where learning across the community is a valued and supported activity" (1990, p. 209) and with Schlechty's idea of teachers as "gold-collar workers [for whom] personal growth and development, job variety and opportunities to engage in creative and meaningful interactions with other adults" is important (1990, pp. 236-237).

In order to assess school performance to ascertain student learning, UA looks at the indicators for individual student progress as well as overall patterns of attendance; stay-in rate; increases in the number of assignments submitted; improvement in the quality of student work; student participation in the life of the school; student adoption of the school values; changes in students' study and work habits, self-concept, plans for the future; number of students applying to and accepted by colleges and universities, college performance; and participation on graduation panels. The patterns must indicate a collective movement toward the goals of the school if teachers are to know that students as a body are learning. The whole must be greater than the sum of the parts, but still the parts must add up to the whole. UA is able to reflect on its institutional patterns because staff keep close watch over students and because they engage in continuous inquiry about the achievement of their goals: "Are we producing intellectually confident students? If yes, how? It not, what do we have to do? How shall we do it? Are our strategies for achieving our goals consistent with our values?" Policy, practice, and structure emanate from both the needs of the students and the goals of the school. The change in the grading policy, previously discussed. the creation of the

Inquiry Reading course, the coupling of courses with labs that support students' work, individual tutorials, college courses on college campuses, and opportunities for students to be spokespeople outside of the school setting are all examples of this.

The Inquiry Reading course was developed because UA wants to create a reading environment -- an environment in which reading is a habit and habitual. It wants students to learn to read critically so that they become not only fluent but also critical readers. All too often, the authority of print inhibits the reader from examining, questioning, and arguing with the substance or assumptions of what he or she is reading. Too often, students assume that if it is in print, it must be true. The Inquiry Reading course was the solution to the problem of developing critical reading skills in students who were not obtaining them sufficiently in their regular coursework. Inquiry Reading is a practice course rather than a substantive course -- like the BMCC Homework Lab in which Barlowe teaches students the homework, study, and organizational skills necessary for successful completion of the Borough of Manhattan Community College course in which they are enrolled. In addition to having immediate relevance, the Inquiry Reading course corresponds to UA's concern with and commitment to their students' futures -- to life after UA. If students are to go on to college, they will need to be skilled critical readers in order to survive. If students lack this skill, and their high schools do not teach it to them, how will they acquire it? When will they acquire it? How will their futures be affected by its presence or absence? And who, if not the high school, will be responsible for ensuring that they have it? UA has taken on the role of mediating its students' experiences to ensure their futures.

Ultimately, UA assesses its performance on the basis of students' success after they leave. Only then does the school know whether students have internalized its values. Because a great many graduates keep in touch with the school, returning to it very much in the manner that young adults, newly independent, return home, Cook is able to informally gather data on how they fare after they leave UA. The feedback will inform future UA policies and practices.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

On April 26, 1991, the front page of ***The New York Times*** featured an article about the National Junior High School Chess Championship. What was newsworthy was who won the championship and whom the new champions beat. A Harlem public junior high school team beat out the prestigious Dalton private school team. Did this occurrence, extraordinary only in its infrequency, warrant such extraordinary coverage? The potential that drove those students to their championship has always been there. Surely it is mathematically improbable, if not impossible, that less potential exists among the underserved in our education system. Is it not rather that it is all too rarely developed, challenged, and channeled?

The Urban Academy is an analog to the chess championship: an instance of potential harnessed and challenged. The Urban Academy aims a penetrating searchlight on school dropouts as tragic acts of mutual abandonment in which society has abandoned its future and students, who are society's future, have abandoned society. Schools become the agents of alienation, when they need to be the agents of reconciliation. The Urban Academy, by providing a capacity-building and confidence-building education swathed in the security of a caring, people-centered community, is just such an agent of reconciliation. The Urban Academy illustrates the power of one school and the potential of all schools to reconnect students to their future and to their society. The students refer to Urban Academy as their last-chance school. Ironically, for most it is their first-chance school, because this is their first chance to have a future. This is genuine accountability for student learning.

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ADVISORY

Appendix 1

NAME: _____

1. When do you think you should be graduating from the Urban Academy?

_____ (semester and year)

2. How likely do you think that is?

___not very
___possible
___very likely

3. What might stand in the way of accomplishing that goal?

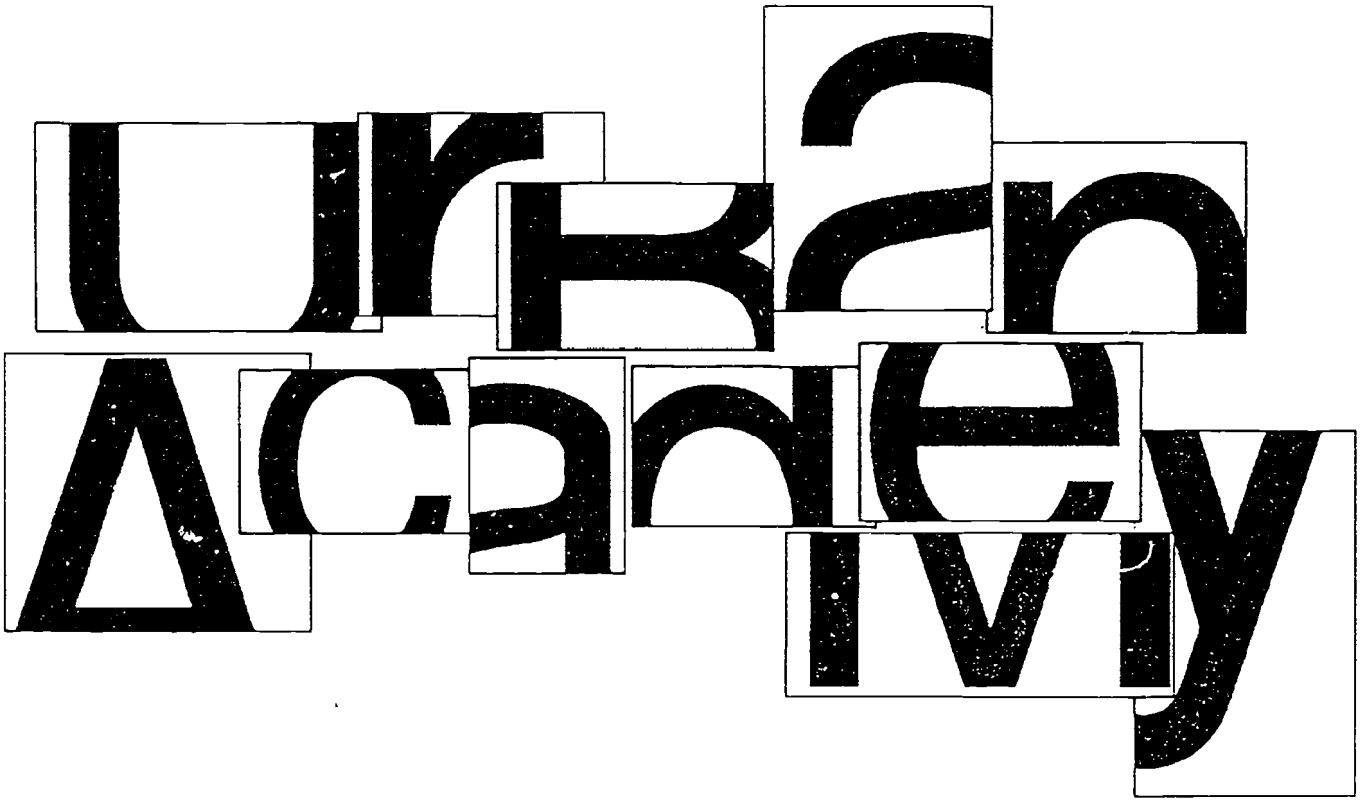
4. At this point, what do you see yourself doing in the semester immediately following graduation from the Urban Academy? (for example: if you graduate in June, where would you see yourself in September)
Be as specific as possible.

5. What, if anything, seems to stand in the way of this goal?

6. What are your long-term plans? What do you realistically see yourself doing four or five years from now?

7. What are the things you think we should be doing to help you accomplish your goals? Be as specific as possible.

Appendix 2



urban academy autumn 1994 course catalogue

ACTING/David
This semester will simultaneously focus on developing the technical skills of the actor and creating a performance. Demands are made on the actor at all levels: intellectually, physically, and intuitively. How does the actor prepare himself to meet these demands? We'll work on both a physical and vocal warm-up. We'll do theater games and improvisation exercises. In order to observe professional actors, we'll go see at least two shows here in the city. This will require evening attendance. We'll examine as many routes toward the creative experience as time permits.

At the same time, the class will choose a piece to perform. Our medium will be story theater. We'll select a narrative in prose and create our own play.

An after school period on Monday afternoons is mandatory. Also, some rehearsals will be held across town at the Ontalogical/Hysteric theater on Second Avenue between tenth and eleventh street. The final performance will also be held at a theater outside Urban Academy. Since the student actors will be doubling as their own technical crew, be prepared (as the performance draws near) for mandatory "Tech Periods" to hang lights build sets, record sound etc...

***For those students who are taking the acting class, but have a strong interest in the technical side of the theater the possibility exists for an Internship in conjunction with *Made by Hand Theater* which is producing The Call of the House of Usher in November. See David for details.

ADVANCED COMPUTERS/Roy
This class will look at the history and use of letters as an art form and as communication tool. Using the computer, students will look at various aspects of type families and discuss their individual backgrounds and use in modem society. The programs Freehand, Fontographer and Photoshop will be used to design and produce individual typefaces, as well as manipulate popular foundries. No prior knowledge of these programs is necessary, although intermediate Macintosh knowledge (and an interest in design) is required.

ALGEBRA/Angela
In this course we will take a look at signed-number operations, linear equations, and graphing, with emphasis on word problems and "real-world" examples. You will work in small groups and have regular quizzes and homework.

ALTERNATIVE PROCESSES in DARKROOM PHOTOGRAPHY/Roy
This class will look at the different ways to produce various types of photographic images. We will experiment with mixing our own processing formulas as well as utilizing different films, print emulsions and papers. Visits to photographers who work with alternative methods and museum/gallery critiques are to be scheduled. The class will also investigate digital imagery and its effect on the photographic medium. Students do not need to have a prior photographic background, but need to understand that it is not a class making traditional "snapshot" images.

AMERICAN HISTORY/Avram
This course will take an in-depth look at several controversial historical issues:

- The encounter between native American, European and African peoples during the period of exploration
- The origins and nature of African-American slavery and freedom in early American history
- The status of women in colonial America as seen through the experience of the Salem witch trials
- The significance or value of the American Revolution for the different groups of people who were affected by it
- The value, intent and purpose of the United States Constitution
- The nature and results of the U.S. government's conflict with the Native American peoples of North America.

We will examine these events from different points of view by reading conflicting historical interpretations of them, by exchanging ideas, by exploring the evidence behind these ideas, by questioning invited guests, and by writing papers which analyze the disagreements around the issues being considered. Hopefully students will develop their own views on a number of historical issues and begin to consider the impact which these issues have had on many of the concerns they have about life and the world today.

ANCIENT HISTORY/Wally
This class will look at mainly Pre-Christian civilizations. You will look at geography, religions, number systems, and languages (and some aspects of the Bible) in small groups.

You will also be doing research on the civilization you've chosen (Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Indian, Mayan, Chinese, Incan, Israelite, Celtic, Greek, etc... you'll select one). There will be map reading, timelines and you'll present an aspect of the civilization you've studied to the class.

There will be museum and library visits, homework, and deadlines.

ART PROJECTS/Tona
Explore a variety of materials, ideas, and techniques. Choose a personal project to focus on, develop your art portfolio, create a self-portrait, or try some new materials to express your creative side. We will have biweekly class critiques of works-in-progress and several visiting artists.

ART WORKSHOP/Tona
A survey course in western art history with in-class projects based on the various artistic styles studied. There will be weekly written assignments and a final individual research project that includes a presentation to the class.

CHEMISTRY OF HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS/Barry
Are some types of soaps and toothpastes really better than others? In this course students will design and carry out experiments to test the claims made about different household products (including skin creams, antacids, mouthwashes, pain relievers, etc...). Students will get a chance to make their own products as well as to analyze what happens to them in chemical reactions.

Each student will be required to record observations and data collected in laboratory notebooks. Class time will also be spent on analyzing experimental results. Students will be expected to become familiar with the chemists' shorthand of writing formulas and reactions.

Students will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- ability to work independently to in small groups
- quality of laboratory notebooks
- quality of written assignments

CIVIL RIGHTS: HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT: Ann, Roy and Jenique
This course will focus on the history of the Civil rights Movement in the United States. The class will consider the Movement's historical roots, its legal foundation, the period of the 60's, the Voting Rights Act and the current status of civil rights. In addition to primary source materials, articles and selections from histories of the period, the class will view several relevant video documentaries (sometimes assigned as homework, to be viewed at home), and will prepare for participation in a conference to be held at the University of Connecticut. Homework assignments, class participation and a research paper will be required in this class. Support to complete the assignments will be provided in a lab period.

COMPUTER PRODUCTIONS/Becky
In this course students will learn to use the computer as a design and publication tool. As a class students will produce Strange Brew. This will include scanning, manipulating images, and making decisions about the layout and graphics of the newspaper. Students will also work on individual presentation projects which could include publishing a book of poetry, designing a flyer or brochure, or laying out a short story. As a class we will visit newspapers and magazines, graphics departments, desk-top publishers and computer hardware stores.
This course is open to students of all computer levels.

Note: You may register for **Strange Brew Journalism** in addition to this course.

Students interested in being editors (overseeing the publishing of the paper) should make a note of it on their registration forms.

DO IT ACAPELLA/Angela
This course is also a group which will learn and perform music from "doo-wop" to African-American folk to traditional spirituals to modern pop and rhythm and blues. Everyone in the group will contribute to selecting music, determining soloists, and setting up performances. The course is designed more for those who just like to sing than for those who want to learn a lot about music theory. Emphasis, however, will be placed on learning to listen critically to close harmony.

Prerequisite: A short audition with Angela. No prior group singing experience is necessary.

DOSTOEVSKY/Alex
This class will focus on Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky's famous novel about murder and salvation. This is a big book, a tough book, so we will read it closely and thoroughly. Class discussions will examine the moral issues raised in Crime and Punishment and explore their relevance in today's society. Films, slides, and supplemental readings will help us paint a more vivid picture of the society Dostoevsky's characters inhabit. In a mock trial at the end of the course, we will try to answer the book's central moral question: Is anyone entitled to murder another human being?

WARNING! This class meets early in the morning. If you have trouble getting to school on time, don't sign up for this class. Attendance and class participation are mandatory.

DRAW NYC/Tona
Develop your drawing skill while exploring interesting sights around NYC. The class will include weekly expeditions to places where we will focus on drawing from observation. Subject matter will include the human figure, as well as perspective, shading techniques, and experimenting with a variety of media.

ECONOMICS: WORK, WEALTH, AND POWER/Avram
The way that things are produced and distributed in a society has a huge impact on everyone's life in that society. This course will explore the impact that different economic philosophies, systems, and policies have on u s, particularly in terms of the kind of work we do and how work effects our status, power and relationships with others.

Students in this course will be required to evaluate:

A- The ideas of leading economic philosophers such as Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and John Maynard Keynes.
B- Various features of the United State' economic system.
C- Different approaches and proposed solutions to economic problems that exist locally, nationally, and in the world as a whole.

They will also analyze their own career goals and choices in light of what they have learned in the course.

A readiness to travel and explore different work places and living spaces is a necessity in this course. A willingness to read sometimes difficult material and respond to it in writing. An understanding of percentages and fractions is not a requirement but those who need work in this area will be expected to improve their skills during the course of the term.

ENGLISH TUTORIAL/Becky
This tutorial is for you if you would like to improve your command of standard English grammar, word use and pronunciation. You will use reading and writing assignments from other classes as well as conversation in this class to focus on the parts of English which are most difficult for you.

FITNESS/Karen
How much exercise do I need to do in order to stay healthy? These and other questions will be addressed throughout the term. Our main focus though will be on actually exercising. Through aerobic work-outs, light weight training using 3-5 lb weights, speed walking and jogging we will work on toning our bodies.

Students are expected to create an original exercise routine as part of their final project.

FOOD WORKSHOP/Karen
This class is designed for those interested in learning more about food. What's in it? How to make it? Where are the best places to buy it? We'll prepare some easy recipes, with a concentration on baked goods. We will also meet people working in the food industry and take out of school trips to see techniques used by cooks in preparing food(s).

GEOMETRY/Wally
This class will look at angle and shape relationships of all sorts from theoretical and practical viewpoints. You'll look for patterns, systems, and structures in the material, and devise ways of measurement, in class and out.

You'll work mainly in small groups and there'll be regular homework, puzzles, and periodic quizzes.
HOMEWORK LAB(1 PERIOD)
Students will be expected to bring work and do this work in silence. This is not a time to meet with others to discuss work. We want to ensure that all students can get work done. Bring a book to read so that if you finish your work, you have something to occupy your time profitably & quietly.

HORTICULTURE-ADVANCED/Nancy
Only students who have successfully passed the Introductory Horticulture class should register for this class, unless you've had prior horticultural experiences.

In this class you will design, set-up, carry-out and analyze an experiment using plants. Extensive readings and more in-depth work will be necessary to do acceptable research.

HORTICULTURE-INTRODUCTION/Nancy
In this class you will have the opportunity to examine and explore the methods of growing plants. This will entail researching established methods and developing new ones. You will be required to do consistent and independent ideas with other students, and setting up and evaluating experimental designs.

INTRODUCTION TO PHOTOGRAPHY/Tona
Develop a critical eye while learning the basics of black and white photography. Learn how to use a camera, develop film and prints, Students will be expected to participate in group critiques, to work independently outside of class, and to participate in discussions based on artists works seen in galleries and museums. Requirements include assigned projects, independent personal work, and a final presentation of work done during the semester.

INVENTING: A SCULPTURE CLASS/Andrea
Working with wood, wire, and clay, among other materials, you will explore sculpture as a process of invention and reinvention. You may choose to create novel contraptions of your own design, or you might improve upon existing designs. At last, a course in which you may reinvent the wheel, redecorate the rollerskate!

Concentration and whole-hearted participation as well as several short writing assignments will be required.

ISSUES/Herb
This course will examine issues that are reported in the daily press. Using newspapers and other readings, students will analyze various viewpoints regarding each topic under discussion. Selected issues such as electoral politics, welfare reform, or child support services may become the object of longer in depth investigations. Each student will be responsible for preparing and participating in at least one in-class debate. There will be regular writing and reading assignments. A research paper will be required.

IT'S A SMALL WORLD/Terri
In this hands-on science course, we will look at different methods of collecting, feeding and observing microscopic animals, plants and "others." Students will be required to use stains and slides in order to observe and document the structure and behavior of the creatures that they find in ponds, puddles and parks around the city.

Each student will identify, research, culture (breed) and perform experiments on at least one class of Invertebrate animal. A research paper will be required.

LATIN AMERICAN FICTION/Phyllis
As North Americans, we have been trained to look to Europe for our literary models while ignoring our own hemisphere and the great writers who have been steadily producing great books. In this class, we will sample the rich literary tradition of Latin America and examine the ties between fiction and truth, magic and realism. WE will also read literature by Latinos raised in North America to understand their point of view.

The reading list will include Short Stories by Latin American Women, One Day of Life by Argueto, and The Captains of the Sands by Amado. Other possibilities include So Far From God by Castillo and To Bury Our Fathers by Ramirez. This course requires a lot of independent reading and to participate you must be willing to assume responsibility for daily reading assignments.

We will also concentrate on writing and the skills needed for literary analysis. Students will be expected to submit a minimum of three critical essays on the books read for class as as well as written homework on shorter reading assignments.

LOVE AND CONFLICT IN LITERATURE/Karen
What do you do if you find yourself attracted to someone everyone else considers to be inappropriate? What if this person is of another race or is of the same sex as you? What social taboos have lovers faced over time and what does literature have to tell us about the ways in which individuals coped with these situations?

In this class we will read short stories, plays and novels dating back to the Greeks as well as works produced by Shakespeare and 20th century writers like James Baldwin, Marguerite Duras, Edith Wharton and others.

This class requires a lot of independent reading. Several critical essays based on the readings will be assigned in addition to regular shorter writing assignments.

MAXIMUM SECURITY/Adam
The crime bill was passed by Congress this summer, and along with a ban on a few assault weapons came a "three strikes and you're out" provision, and a sentence of death for 52 crimes which had previously been punished by lengthy prison terms. The number of people in prison — which is already around 1,000,000 — will surely grow, as will the number of people who are put to death every year. But do prisons, or the death penalty, work as they are supposed to?

This course will be something of a follow up to the Behind Bars course taught last semester, but it is open to any student who wishes to take it. We will trace briefly the history of prisons but spend more time looking at maximum security prisons. We will take an in depth look at the Attica prison revolt in 1971, by reading books and viewing films about that uprising. We will also read works by and about people in maximum security prisons, and on death row. We will ask several questions, such as "are prisons the best method of criminal punishment," "does the death penalty deter crime," and "what types of people are in prison, and why are they there?"

There will be several short writing assignments, a significant amount of (interesting) reading, and at least one longer paper. Students will be able to work towards their Social Studies proficiency in this course.

MATH LAB/Becky & Terri
If you are taking Algebra or Geometry and are not yet proficient in decimals, fractions, proportions, percents and signed numbers, then this lab will be an add-on to your class. You'll work mainly at the computers, teaching yourself using a math review program. If extra help is needed, a teacher will be available.

MYSTERIES OF FLIGHT/Terri
This course combines physics and biology to explore how both living and manufactured things defy gravity. We will study insects and birds as well as planes, parachutes, balloons and more. Students will be required to make a flying or gliding machine which will be "air-tested" outdoors (weather permitting).

NOVELS/Barry
This is a course for students who 1) have read novels only because teachers assigned them or 2) would like to read more but can't seem to get started or 3) simply do not enjoy reading novels.

Each students will read novels of his/her choosing Students will be encouraged to not only read more books they can enjoy, but to discuss the ideas found in the books. Students must be willing to show respect for ideas and opinions of other students that they may not agree with. In addition, students will keep a log in which they will write about the novel being read. Guest authors will be invited to the class whenever possible.

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PHYSICS: ELECTRICITY AND MAGNETISM/Terri
Electricity is a major part of our everyday life, but how important is magnetism really? How are the two related? What are they and how do they work? We will explore these and other issues in this class. We will also look at forms of conservation.

Students will design, carry out, analyze and write-up experiments dealing with electricity and magnetism. Most classes will focus on hands-on work by the students but there will also be readings, discussions and demonstrations.

POETRY: CHOOSE A MUSE/Phyllis
Enter into the world and thoughts and spirits of a poet you greatly admire. Read widely in that poet's works. Read what others have to say about your poet's life and poetry. Be inspired in your poet's life and poetry. Be inspired in your own poetry writing by the style and substance of your "poetic muse."

This will become a student-run workshop. As the term progresses, you will become the expert on your poet, sharing what you've learned and assuming responsibility for teaching other students about your poet's work.

In addition to studying and writing about professional poets' work, you will also keep daily journals as well as write and revise your own poems.

POLYGRAPH/Wally
This class will look at non-linear graphing, analytic geometry, systems of equations, and polynomials. You'll look for patterns, systems and structures in the material.

You'll work mainly in small groups and there will be regular homework, puzzles, and periodic quizzes.

Required: Teacher recommendation.

POP CULTURE CRITICISM/Avram
This course will try to help people develop their criticism proficiencies by speaking with invited guests about their taste in and analysis of popular (and not so popular) art and entertainment.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP (Tona)
Advanced art workshop, permission from the instructor is required.

PSYCHOLOGY/Nancy
Is it possible to learn about someone by looking at pictures they've drawn, dreams they've had, stories they tell?

Psychologists have used tests such as the TAT, Rorschack and dream analysis as tools to help them understand their clients. Is this legitimate?

In this class we will examine what is called projection. You will be required to complete a research paper in order to pass this class.

PROB-STAT/Wally
This class will present an introduction to probability, and statistics (applied probability). You'll look at dice, cards, coins etc... and work out probabilities look at fairness, confidence, averages, and sample spaces', and assumptions people make. the class will look at data that you've collected, from newspaper, other classes, etc... and try to make predictions and establish cause-effect relationships.

You'll work mainly in small groups and there'll be regular homework, puzzles, and periodic quizzes.

Required: Teacher recommendation.

SCIENCE RESEARCH METHODS/Barry & Angela
How do scientists conduct research? In this course we will be looking at how to solve research problems in various areas of science. We will be reading as well as analyzing original scientific papers. Students will have the opportunity to design and carryout their own experiments. There will be trips to libraries as well as to research laboratories to interview scientists whenever possible.

This course is open to everyone.

Students in this course will be expected to work independently and to be responsible for completing all outside reading and writing assignments on schedule.

SOCIAL DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY: The Newspaper Vendor/Herb & Roy
This class will produce and publish a photographic essay which looks at the newspaper vendors in New York City. To accomplish this goal, students will be expected to:

...complete several individual, mini-photographic essays in a abbreviated time periods
...conduct oral interviews with the individuals they photograph and about the surrounding areas
...collect pertinent information (from various sources) about the visual history of newspaper vendors
...punctually complete various in & out of class assignments
...work together with other group members while handling various individual responsibilities on the predetermined topic
...visit and critically analyze various exhibitions and photographic collections around the city.

Students wishing to take this class should have previous photographic experience or receive the consent of one of the instructors. Passing grades will be given only upon the completion of an acceptable class publication.

SPANISH WORKSHOP/Ann
This will be a pilot program open to a small number of students to explore the use of computers to teach a foreign language.

STRANGE BREW/Becky & Adam
There are two courses involved in publishing Strange Brew: Journalism and Computer Productions.

The Urban Academy's newspaper, Strange Brew, is a student publication written by UA students for Urban Academy as well as for the larger community.

STRANGE BREW/JOURNALISM/Becky & Adam
Students in this course will work on journalistic skills—research, interviews, generating story ideas, drafting, revision and editing. The class will visit reporters and editors at New York City newspapers and magazines. Students will compare coverage of events by different newspapers. Much of this course will be devoted to writing articles for the newspaper. Small groups of writers will read drafts and work with the writers to improve their articles.

Students interested in being editors (overseeing the publishing of the paper) should make a note of it on their registration forms.

Note: The production of the newspaper will largely take place in the Computer Production course. If you are interested in doing that work, sign up for that course. You may sign up for both courses.

STRANGE BREW PRODUCTION
See Computer Productions Course

TEXTILES/Barry, Nancy and Terri
Knitting, crocheting, band-weaving, embroidery - all of these techniques can be used to created and/or beautify cloth. Students in this independent study will learn and work with a technique of their choice. We will meet people who earn their living with some of these skills and will take out-of-school trips to see how they can be used.

VIDEO DOC/Alex
Introduction to documentary storytelling. To learn how to use the video cameras, microphones, and editing equipment, everyone will work together on a class documentary about some aspect of Urban Academy. All students are then expected to plan and complete a short documentary on the subject of their choice. Classwork will include shooting and editing assignments, critiques of student work, and screenings of documentary films. Because class time is limited, we will meet after school on Tuesdays to edit. Students who want this course must be prepared to work independently after school and on weekends to finish their assignments. No incomplete will be given in the spring semester.

WAR AND GENOCIDE/Karen & Adam
Why is it that people who seem to have so much in common often end up killing each other?

In this class, we will examine four or five instances of mass killing that have arisen between neighboring groups of people. We will focus on the rise of the Nazis and the resulting Holocaust, the continuing struggle between Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East, the Khmer Rouge's mass killings in Cambodia, and perhaps the recent massacres in Rwanda. We will ask questions such as "what does the work 'genocide' refer to," and "why do genocides happen?"

Students will be expected to read numerous book excerpts and magazine articles, and to write several short analytic papers which will lead to a final, longer paper. Students will be able to work towards their Social Studies proficiency in this class.

WORDS: A WRITING WORKSHOP/Becky
What does it mean when someone says you are "talking white" or "talking black"? Do you switch the way you speak when you are in different situations? Would you tell the same story differently to your best friend and to a police officer? Do you write the same way that you speak? Do you respect people more if they speak a certain way? How do people of different cultures use the English language differently? Do you ever feel silenced because you can't find the words you want?

In this course we will read, discuss and write about these and other issues. There will be a focus on writing—your writing about your experiences with language. Small groups of students/writers will work together on all of your pieces—brainstorming, discussing, revising and editing them.

Urban Academy Weekly Schedule : Spring 1991

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
8:30	Adolescent Issues Computer Projects Issues V I D E O D O C D A N C E	Individual Inquiry Advanced Spanish Computer I Calculus Sexist Society? A LAW Introduction to African Lit B	Same as 1st Period Tuesday	Same as 1st Period Monday	Same as 1st Period Tuesday	8:30
Period 1	F I L M S T U D Y					Period 1
9:25						9:25
Period 2	Mortal Questions Beginning Spanish French	Writing Math W Math T American History CHEMISTRY Journalism	Same as 2nd Period Tuesday	Same as 2nd Period Monday Same as 1st + 2nd Periods Monday	Same as 2nd Period Tuesday	Period 2
10:15	B	R	E	A	K	10:15
10:25	Work and Workers Supreme Court Intermediate Spanish Introduction to African Lit A Homework Lab	Computer II Politics of Money BMCC LAB. Sexist Society? B Electricity and Magnetism EVOLUTION	Same as 3rd Period Monday	Same as 3rd Period Tuesday	Lang Lab B BMCC Lab Politics of Money Computer II Sexist Society? B Electricity + Mag EVOLUTION	10:25
Period 3						Period 3
11:15						11:15
Lunch +	Student Committee Blues Club College Club	(*) SAT Prep.	(*) Calculus	Electricity and Magnetism Lab Yearbook OPERA CLUB	(*) SAT Prep Chess Club	+ Lunch
12:30		12:2		12:15		12:30
Period 4	Media Investigation War in The Gulf Progress? Action Research Children Photography	Lang Lab. A Studio Art A Poetry Workshop Novels Puzzles A Homework LAB B	Community Service	Lang Lab A Studio Art A Poetry Workshop Novels Puzzles B Homework Lab A	Advisory: Ann, Josh, Barry, Maria, Becky, Nancy, Edward	Period 4
1:35		Break		Break	Break	1:35
1:45		Studio Art B Religion and Ancient Hist. Latin American Fiction Literature Volleyball		Same as 5th Period Tuesday	Same as 4th + 5th Periods Monday	1:45
Period 5						Period 5
2:55						2:55

(*) Make-up Homework Lab Available

↑ BMCC/LANG ↑

↑ BMCC/LANG ↑

↑ Friday All-Afternoon Tutoring and Mond

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Appendix 3

Appendix 4

ORGANIZING YOUR TIME: A WORKSHEET

NAME: _____

How are your days organized during the school week? Write in major activities:

	mon	tues	wed	thur	fri	sat	sun
1am							
2am							
3am							
4am							
5am							
6am							
7am							
8am							
9am							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							
7pm							
8pm							
9pm							
10pm							
11pm							
midnight							

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOUR DAYS ORGANIZED DURING THE SCHOOL WEEK: WRITE IN MAJOR ACTIVITIES

	mon	tues	wed	thur	fri	sat	sun
1am							
2am							
3am							
4am							
5am							
6am							
7am							
8am							
9am							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							
7pm							
8pm							
9pm							
10pm							
11pm							
midnight							

Appendix 5

NAME: _____ TOPIC: _____

SPEAKER'S EVALUATION

We are interested in how you felt about your visit to the Urban Academy. Would you please answer the questions below in as much detail as possible. THANK YOU. (Use reverse side if necessary)

1. How would you compare this group to others you've spoken with?

2. Please comment on the type of questions that were asked:
(content, knowledge, phrasing, etc.) (note specific questions if possible)

3. Please comment on what you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the group:

4. What is your impression of the academic level of the group?
(above average/average/below etc.)

5. Please comment on the role you played when you spoke:

6. What recommendations would you make to the group to improve their performance?

7. Additional comments:

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